

THE
WESLEYAN MINISTERS

AND
THEIR SLANDERERS :

BEING
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CHRISTIAN PROPRIETY OF
THE DISCIPLINARY ACTS OF THE LATE CONFERENCE;
A RELIGIOUS ESTIMATE OF THE PUBLIC CONDUCT OF THE
EXPULSED MINISTERS;
AND A BRIEF EXPOSURE OF THE CALUMNY WITH WHICH
THE MINISTERS AND INSTITUTIONS OF METHODISM
HAVE BEEN RECENTLY ASSAILED.

BY GEORGE SMITH, F.S.A.,
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AND though I give my body, even that I burned, and have not LOVE, it profiteth me nothing.—
CRANMER'S *Translation of Paul*.

SLANDER, that worst of poisons, ever finds
An easy entrance to ignoble minds.—HERVEY.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following pages have been extorted, by the force of circumstances, from the pen of one who would much rather employ it in peaceful efforts to elucidate the word of life, than on any controversial or disputatious subject. The writer, during the past thirty years, has felt a deep and steady interest in all the trial and conflict, progress and blessing, which have stood connected with Methodism throughout that period. This long-continued and intimate acquaintance has led him to a brotherly affection for the Wesleyan people, a hearty approval of Wesleyan institutions and polity, and a cordial esteem for Wesleyan Ministers. But, although he does not pretend to be insensible to the influence of friendship, nor to be able to divest his mind of partiality for that *form* of godliness which he has long admired, he loves Methodism chiefly, and identifies himself with its interests principally, because he conscientiously regards it as a great and wisely-appointed agency, raised up and sustained by God, for the dissemination of evangelical truth, and the spread of scriptural holiness, throughout Britain and the world. He has therefore seen with deep regret and much pain the extraordinary proceedings, and long-continued and violent agitation, which have been brought into operation, in consequence of the disciplinary acts of the late Conference; and having carefully considered the whole case, and assured himself, by strict examination, that no valid objection has been made against the acts of discipline referred to, that the expelled Ministers have taken an unjustifiable course, and that much error has been disseminated, and much evil inflicted upon the church of Christ in consequence; he has felt called upon to assist in disabusing the public mind, by placing what he believes to be sound views of the case before the church and the world.

In doing this, while the writer has endeavoured to main-

tain Christian fidelity, he has been equally anxious to avoid inflicting unnecessary pain ; and, therefore, if any statement or expression should appear to have been dictated unkindly, he can confidently affirm that this is only appearance,—that spirit is alien from his heart. He has found a great evil in extensive operation, and has in truth and love endeavoured to check its progress, and restore confidence and peace to the minds of his brethren ; and he commits the effort, in humble confidence, to Him who is the Searcher of all hearts, and “Head over all to his church.” It is only necessary for him to add, that as many persons have taken a part in this controversy who are not members of the Wesleyan society, he has thought it right to speak more explicitly of Wesleyan institutions than would otherwise have been required.

TREVU, CAMBORNE,

November 12th, 1849.

THE
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THE teaching of holy Scripture respecting the constitution of the Christian church must be received as unquestionable verity. According to that teaching, the principle of union, and the spiritual character of the entire organization, will be fully apparent, and place it in direct contrast to all the secular combinations and corporate institutions which have obtained in the world. The primitive element which gives existence to the church of Christ, is the personal and spiritual union of every believer with the Redeemer as the living Head of his people ; the second is the bond of spiritual brotherhood which, arising out of, and based upon, "the love of God," supplies the principle of Christian union, and cements the believers in Christ into one body. The operation of this principle is thus beautifully described by St. Paul : " But that speaking the truth in love we may make all the members grow in him who is the Head, even Christ. By whom the whole body being aptly joined together and compacted through the service of every joint, he maketh increase of the body in measure, according to the inworking of each particular part to the building of himself by love."* The union of believers with Christ, and their incorporation through the life derived from their Divine Head, into one body, exhibit the peculiar character and constitution of the church.

Various schemes of external polity have been devised to give Christian society a visible and permanent existence. Terms of admission, and tests of character, vary with the circumstances of time and place. The form of government, the plan of discipline, the mode of propounding doctrine, and even, to some extent, the doctrines taught, are found very different in the several Christian denominations of our own country. Nor are we at liberty to take

* Eph. iv, 15, 16, MACKNIGHT'S translation.

an exclusive view of these subjects, and unchristianize those who do not adopt the same model of polity as ourselves; but rather to revere all who hold "the Head," their Lord and ours. It is, however, no infringement of the most enlarged catholicity to maintain, that the church whose polity and ecclesiastical arrangements are best adapted to recognise and maintain this spiritual union among the members of the body, and the vital union of the whole with Christ, affords the best exemplification of the teaching of Scripture on this important subject.

Without intending disparagement to any other section of the church, it may be truly asserted, that Wesleyan Methodism embodies, in a remarkable degree, those peculiarities of ecclesiastical arrangement which render the spiritual life and union which have been described, essential to the continued existence, not to say prosperity, of the body.

This is to be attributed, not so much to the exercise of extensive foresight or profound judgment, as to the fact, that the offices and institutions of Methodism arose out of the religious requirements of an awakened and spiritually-minded people. As the Founder of these societies was successful in his course of ministerial labour, a necessity was created for suitable and extensive spiritual provision: this the providence of God supplied. When penitents and believers gathered around the first Methodist Ministers, to obtain special instruction and means of grace, class-meetings were devised to meet the emergency. Thus Class-Leaders, Local Preachers, Stewards, and Trustees, were raised up, as lay agents in this great work; and Leaders'-Meetings, Local Preachers'-Meetings, Quarterly-Meetings, District-Meetings, and even the Conference, arose as the great institutions of Wesleyan Methodism; and, as might have been expected from their origin, they are all essentially pervaded by a religious character and spirit. Nor does the peculiarity of the system terminate here: a free and unreserved communication of personal religious experience distinguishes the whole economy, and prevails throughout all orders and grades in these societies. When a person solicits admission into this communion, he is expected to express himself as earnestly desirous "to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from his sins." He is then appointed to a class, where he is required to attend every week, to answer such questions respecting his religious state as the *Leader* may address to him, and to receive such advice and instruction as he may give. When a person is appointed to the office of a Leader, he is usually questioned in the Leaders'-Meeting as to his religious state, his knowledge of Wesleyan doctrine, and his approval of Wesleyan discipline. A person proposed as a Local Preacher has to pass through a similar, but more extensive, examination in the Quarterly-Meeting of Local Preachers. When a Local Preacher, who has laboured with acceptance in his own Circuit, believes that he is

called to devote himself to the work of the ministry, and is judged eligible thereto, he is recommended by the Quarterly-Meeting of his Circuit as a candidate ; he is subsequently examined by the District-Meeting, and afterward by a Committee in London, before he is received by the Conference.

Nor does this frank and free interchange of religious thought and feeling cease, when persons are appointed to office in the Wesleyan community. The Leader, in every class-meeting, speaks of his religious feelings, views, and experience. The Local Preacher is not only subject to a quarterly inquiry as to his moral character, soundness of doctrine, attention to discipline, and ability for preaching ; but, as he is required to meet in class, he has also to speak of his religious experience weekly. An itinerant Minister is not only subject to an annual inquiry at the District-Meeting and at the Conference, but generally speaks of his religious experience at the quarterly visitations of the classes, and in the frequently recurring love-feasts.* From all this, it will be abundantly evident, that *transparency of religious character* is the genius of Wesleyan Methodism. Every person remaining in those societies virtually pledges himself to make a free communication respecting his religious hopes, fears, prospects, attainments ; in fact, to afford a frequent and frank revelation of his religious state to his brethren. This peculiarity of Methodism should be carefully studied in all its relations and results, by every one who would form a correct opinion on any particular element of Wesleyan polity, or exercise of Wesleyan discipline. Such study is the more necessary, as this ruling element of Methodism not only tends to maintain a spirit of healthy, sterling piety in these societies, but also gives a character to their discipline. As the rules of Methodism prohibit many things tolerated by the laws of the country, because of the religious character and spiritual object of the system ; so, the manner of dealing with those members who are supposed to have been unfaithful, or offenders, is not limited by the rules and technicalities of legal courts, but arises out of the voluntary and friendly relation which the parties bear to each other, and the distinct personal religious profession which every Wesleyan is supposed to make.

Another important element of Wesleyan Methodism is found in the responsible position occupied by the Ministers. They, in their Annual Conference, constitute the supreme legislative and judicial body of the whole Connexion ; and, as such, are the guardians of their own religious and ministerial character. To the possession of such extensive powers by the Wesleyan Ministers, serious objec-

* It may be objected, that this practice is not universal ; but in thirty years' acquaintance with Methodism, I have met with but one Preacher who has been an uniform exception ; and that man is one of the expelled Ministers.

tions have been made from time to time : in another place, I shall venture an opinion upon this point ; but here it is sufficient to say, that the possession of these powers is, and always has been, an essential part of the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism.

Having made these preliminary observations, I proceed to inquire into the Christian propriety of those disciplinary acts of the late Conference, which have recently been brought so prominently before the public. The occasion of these may be briefly stated. Some few years since an anonymous pamphlet, entitled "Fly-Sheets," was gratuitously circulated among the Wesleyan Ministers and others. This, after a while, was followed by another, and another, until as many as four numbers had appeared. The avowed object of these Tracts was to expose the alleged delinquencies of the principal official Ministers in the Connexion. The subject naturally attracted the attention of the Conference ; and, after various measures had been in vain resorted to, to induce the authors of these charges to prefer them openly at the District-Meeting, or the Conference, and as strong suspicion attached to certain Preachers as being implicated in the production, circulation, or active patronage of the "Fly-Sheets," it was ultimately agreed to call such parties to the Conference, and ask them severally the question, "Are you the author, or connected with the authorship, of the 'Fly-Sheets?'" This measure led to the expulsion of three Ministers from the Wesleyan body, the Revs. James Everett, Samuel Dunn, and William Griffith. Against this act a storm of opposition has been raised : it has been denounced as unjust, unrighteous, tyrannical, inquisitorial, Popish ; in fact, the entire vocabulary of abuse has been ransacked, and its foulest terms collected, for the purpose of condemning and stigmatizing this act of discipline. I hope to show that, fairly considered, the conduct of the Conference in respect of this case was not only not blameworthy, but wise and righteous.

First, then, let me call the attention of the Christian reader to the nature of the crime with which the Conference had to deal. It was that of concocting and publishing malicious slanders against aged and eminent Ministers of Christ. Does this language appear too strong ? Let its justification be read in the fact, that neither the expelled Ministers themselves, nor any of their supporters, no, nor any other party whatever, has dared to attempt to maintain the truth of the "Fly-Sheets." But, more than this, although I make no pretension to such vast knowledge of public men and public affairs, in the Wesleyan world, as would enable me to understand and apply all the statements in these pamphlets, I am sufficiently informed to be able, of my own knowledge, to denounce them as *wicked and slanderous publications*.

Further : these infamous tracts have, if possible, a worse trait of character than the assertion of falsehood. The manner in which they are composed, and the spirit which they breathe, indicate in

the author or authors a mind as opposed to the mind of Christ, as darkness is to light. If any man of sound principle, not to say a Christian, really believed such allegations as are here exhibited against Ministers of the Gospel, he would blush, and lament the depth to which depraved humanity could descend. But how do the "Fly-Sheet" writers deal with this grave and painful subject? With untimely glee and unseemly jocularly. The spirit of malignity, rejoicing in evil, revels on every page, and gloats over charges which piety would weep to mention. A careless man may write untruth, and not always be justly chargeable with falsehood. A hasty man may sometimes retail scandal, and not certainly merit the reproach of a slanderer. But the "Fly-Sheets" throughout evince an evil *animus*, which proves that none but a wicked man could have written them.

The Conference had this crime before them; a crime committed not only against some of its most respected Ministers, but equally so against the Wesleyan statutes, and the laws of God. This crime is further suspected to have been committed by other Wesleyan Ministers, and this suspicion pointed specially to a particular man. On the latter point much clamour has been raised, as if the statement had been a groundless assertion, made for the purpose of implicating Mr. Everett. Yet nothing connected with Wesleyan Methodism is of more public notoriety. From Liverpool to Brighton, from Leeds to the Land's-End, wherever I have heard the "Fly-Sheets" spoken of, they have always, in some way or manner, been associated with the name of this Minister. It is not for me to account for the currency of this rumour: I speak to the fact of its certain existence and general prevalence throughout the Connexion.*

In those circumstances, presuming that no individual was pre-

* Certain facts appear to have been known by different individuals, the knowledge of which would necessarily implicate Mr. Everett with the authorship of the "Fly-Sheets," and consequently circulate an impression to that effect. As an instance, the Rev. J. T. Milner, of Wakefield, tells Mr. Everett, "With regard to the 'Fly-Sheets,' 1. I know that you have expressed your approbation of them. 2. I know that you have endeavoured to prove, by lengthened argument, that there is nothing dishonourable in their anonymous character. 3. I know that you have borne, in whole or in part, *the cost of their publication*. 4. I know that you have complained that a certain gentleman in the West of England, who held out some hopes, or made some promises, of pecuniary help, did not *fully* realize your expectations. 5. I know that you have wished that a book similar in character and spirit to the 'Fly-Sheets,' only on a more extended scale, should be published, to be entitled 'The Buntingian Dynasty.' 6. I know that you have *urged* on one or more individuals to undertake such a publication, promising to render considerable assistance *yourself*." Now, although all this would not be sufficient to prove the authorship of these tracts, I think the reader will agree with me in the opinion, that it must be impossible for all this to be known, without producing a strong suspicion on the subject.

pared to furnish positive proof of Mr. Everett being the author of these slanderous tracts, were the Conference to pass over the whole matter, and allow the evil to exist, and the poison to rankle in the constitution of Methodism? Or were they to adopt some other, although it might be an extraordinary measure, to purge away the guilt, or to destroy the groundless suspicion? They, happily, in my judgment, adopted the latter alternative. Mr. Everett was accordingly questioned, and, refusing to answer by a frank and simple denial, was expelled.

I will consider this act of discipline, first, in its immediate relation to Mr. Everett. He had rights, associated with important duties and high responsibilities: taking a calm view of the whole case, has he been treated unwisely, harshly, or unjustly? This question I hope to answer.

Mr. Everett was one among a thousand other Ministers, all of whom he was bound to regard as brethren, to whom he professed to be united by the most sacred bond of brotherhood that can join human spirits. He, while meeting these men in public as fellow-helpers in the cause of Christ, and brethren in the Lord, is suspected, strongly and generally suspected, of privately and anonymously libelling their character, and falsely and slanderously undermining their reputation! He is guilty or he is innocent of this crime. If the former, is any punishment which a voluntary religious society can inflict too severe a penalty for such conduct? But it is said, "All this presumption is unjust: every man should be regarded as innocent until he is proved to be guilty." This may be perfectly sound as a forensic maxim; but the public mind will not be bound by it. When general suspicion is entertained respecting a man's reputation, although he should never be subjected to judicial investigation, the world will not set down his innocence as unquestionable. Mr. Everett was an aged Minister, lying under general suspicion of a crime of the blackest character; what, in such circumstances, would Christian equity dictate? First, I think it will be admitted on all hands, that, if possible, the doubt should be cleared up, and the truth made manifest. This was called for, no less on account of Mr. Everett himself, than for the sake of the general character of the ministry, and the cause of religion. Then what more honourable, simple, effective means could have been devised in the circumstances, than to call the suspected party, and give him an opportunity, by the articulation of a single monosyllable, to wipe off the aspersion from his fame, and scatter prevailing suspicion to the winds? I am told, "Mr. Everett must be considered innocent." Be it so: then, in my judgment, this course was unobjectionable. Any one who regarded Mr. Everett as guilty, and wished to protect him as a guilty man in the *status* and privilege of a Wesleyan Minister, might object to this course, as likely to defeat that object; but on the supposition

of his innocence, this mode seems exactly that which the best friends of Mr. Everett would have desired. Much snarling sarcasm has been employed because this interrogatory was called "a brotherly question." I may be inadequate to judge of the influence of honourable feeling in other men; but if I had a brother occupying the position in which Mr. Everett stood when he entered the last Conference, I would have been the first man to have urged the putting of such a question.

But Mr. Everett's friends insinuate that, although innocent, he was compelled to refuse, indignantly to refuse, to reply to this question, as it implied a dishonourable reflection upon his reputation. I cannot believe that any man who duly considers the nature and responsibility of the Christian ministry can seriously urge this objection. "We," said the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus's sake." A Christian Minister lives for his Master, and his Master's cause: the spirit he is called to evince is that of self-sacrifice; and, as such, Mr. Everett was bound to rise above any mere personal feeling, for the sake of ministerial character, and the cause of God. But as a Wesleyan Minister he was laid under more precise and special obligation to do this. Mr. Wesley's Twelve Rules of a Helper taught him "to be ashamed of nothing but sin," and required him "to act in all things not according to his own will, but as a son in the Gospel." It was therefore due to himself, no less than to the Conference, that he should have surmounted any personal feeling, and have given an honest answer to the question asked.

But the great complaint of this individual is, that he was expelled because he refused to criminate himself. This is the grand charge: let us examine it. The law of England generally forbids any question to be put to a person charged with having committed a crime, the answer to which would lead the party to admit his guilt. This is as it should be. But then the question arises, Are the circumstances of a Christian Minister, as such, and the case of a mere member of civil society, so exactly similar, that the same course of proceeding must necessarily apply to each, if suspected of delinquency? This has been taken for granted; and it has therefore been asked, with an air of triumphant confidence, "Is the privilege granted to a felon to be denied to a Minister of Christ?" The answer to this is, that when a man is placed before a civil court, he has the common privilege of the law of the land, whether he be a Minister or not; but this does not touch the question,—whether there are not distinct professions and voluntary associations, in which it may be just and right, as between themselves, to establish other tests of character, and a very different course of proceeding, in the case of suspected offenders, from that which is in use in courts of law. Suppose the case of a Physician

or Surgeon, elected on the recommendation of satisfactory testimonials, on the medical staff of a public hospital, and afterward suspected of unprofessional behaviour. Does it follow, of inevitable necessity, that, in order to meet this case, there must be a judge, a jury, an accuser, an indictment, witnesses, and all the paraphernalia of a court of justice? The idea is absurd; and that, not because the suspected party is denied the privilege given to the dock in Newgate, but because he belongs to a profession where the honour of every member is supposed to raise him above duplicity and falsehood, and therefore a friendly interrogation, and *a word of honour*, destroy the suspicion, or the refusal of it sends the hapless delinquent *to Coventry*. I am told that it is not unfrequent in the army, in case any damaging report should obtain circulation respecting the officers of a regiment, which cannot be fixed on any individual, for the president of the mess to rise in his place, and, having alluded to the current report, and laying his hand upon his heart, to say, to this effect,—that he is innocent of the charge; the next in seniority or rank follows in a similar manner, until all have asserted their innocence; or, if one declines, he instantly loses *caste*, and is henceforth discountenanced by every other officer.

I know Mr. Everett may attempt to parry this, as he has other parallel cases, by saying, “I am no Physician, I am no military officer;” but this will not serve his purpose. He has been a Methodist Minister, and, as such, was associated with a body of men who stand in character above the level of civil society, not merely by conventional regulations, or professional self-respect, but by sterling religious attainment. Every Wesleyan Minister presented himself to the Connexion, as a man renewed in righteousness, who had Christ formed in his heart the hope of glory, and professing to be specially called by the Holy Ghost to devote himself wholly to the work of the ministry, that he might save souls from death. These professions being regarded as justified by probationary exercises and repeated examinations, he was admitted, and thenceforth supported as a Minister of Christ. A man who stood in those circumstances is strongly and generally suspected of having committed a great evil, which not only affects the religious character of eminent men in the ministry, but also damages the reputation of the whole body. A thousand of his brethren have already voluntarily declared that they abhor the crime, and are innocent of its perpetration; when he is called and asked, whether he has committed this sin, or has had any participation in it. How is he to act? All his vows of obedience to Christ rest upon him, all his religious professions remain. Mr. Everett stood to hear this question, as a man living in a state of mind incompatible with deliberate sin; his religious avowals had raised him to a position of honour, and super-civil-society privilege. If he has not retained his spirituality of mind, and power over sin, he has virtually been

enjoying a *status*, and receiving money, under false pretences. In those circumstances, he was called upon to assert his innocence, and thus virtually to renew the profession of religion which had made him a Minister. This would have removed the suspicion, and have confirmed him in his position. He refuses to do so, claiming exemption under the laws of civil society, and consequently descends to its level. His refusal to answer is followed by no lacerations or fines; he is sent neither to Newgate nor the Hulks. He had been raised to the special privilege and elevation of the ministry by a profession of religion, which religion is impugned by a suspicion of sin: he refuses to maintain his profession by a declaration of innocence; and, consequently, so far as Wesleyan Methodism is concerned, he returns to the ranks of civil society whence he had emerged. Where is the injustice or the tyranny of this proceeding?

Is it still objected, that, by this process, the man is compelled to criminate himself? The answer is, that unless he has been unfaithful, this result cannot follow. This objection is, in itself, an indirect plea of guilty. It amounts to just this: "I will not answer, for I know I am guilty; but the sin has been committed with such perfect secrecy and tact, that I defy you to bring it home to me by direct proof: I therefore claim to be continued as a recognised Minister of Christ." Is this claim to be allowed? I think no pious man will answer in the affirmative. On Mr. Everett's own showing, therefore, taking the most liberal view of his rights and claims, in connexion with his personal duty and responsibility, I conclude that the conduct of the Conference toward him was tolerant, wise, and righteous.

Secondly, I think this case should be considered in reference to the great body of Wesleyan Ministers. When eighteen hundred men are united together in one federal compact, as Ministers of Christ, it is impossible but that they should have a common interest in the exercise of any extraordinary act of discipline toward one of the members of the body. This common interest might, in some circumstances, naturally lead to a jealousy, whether, having the power of self-government, they would not be led to manifest an unrighteous leniency towards each other, by which the ministerial character would sink in purity and public estimation. Here, however, nothing of this is heard of: the complaint alleges undue harshness, tyrannical injustice. Let us candidly examine these allegations.

It is urged, that this expulsion took place contrary to Wesleyan law.

In answer to this, it might be replied, that the judgment of the Conference is, in fact, the tenure upon which every Wesleyan Minister holds his office. During Mr. Wesley's life-time, the Preachers associated with him acted entirely under his control;

and prior to his death he obtained the enrolment in Chancery of a DEED POLL, by which the Wesleyan polity was perpetuated and legalized. In this Deed, the power formerly exercised by Mr. Wesley was transferred to one hundred of the Preachers, who were appointed to constitute the legal Conference. As the vacancies occasioned by retirement and death are filled up annually, this body continues to be the permanent seat of legal power. In this Deed it is declared, "that the Conference should and might expel, and put out from being a member thereof, or from being in connexion therewith, or from being upon trial, any person, member of the Conference, or admitted upon trial, *for any cause which to the Conference might seem fit and necessary* ; and every member of the Conference expelled and put out, should cease to be a member thereof, to all intents and purposes, as though he were naturally dead." In this Deed it was also provided, "that the act of the majority in number of the Conference assembled as aforesaid, should be had, taken, and be, the act of the whole Conference." On the subject of expulsion, therefore, *the solemn judgment of a majority of the Conference is the law of the Connexion.*

But it is alleged that, in this instance, the Conference departed from that regular line of usage which has become the common law of the body, and thus unjustly expelled Mr. Everett, by acting upon an arbitrary enactment made so recently as 1835.

To show the utter fallacy of this allegation, it may be replied, that the declaratory Resolutions of 1835 (so called, not only at the last Conference, but in the Minutes of the current year) were specially designed to assert the power of District-Meetings. This is evident from their whole tenor and construction. That they also contained an UNANIMOUS DECLARATION that the Conference held the undoubted right of instituting any inquiry or investigation into the moral, Christian, or ministerial conduct of the Preachers under their care, even although no formal or regular accusation may have been previously announced on the part of any individual ; and further declared, "that all Preachers who desire to remain in ministerial communion with us *are considered as retaining that communion on THE DISTINCT CONDITION THAT THEY HOLD THEMSELVES INDIVIDUALLY PLEDGED to submit, in a peaceable and Christian spirit,* to the usual disciplinary investigations, not only of Conference, but of all its District-Committees:"—all this is freely admitted ; but it is difficult to conceive how this admission benefits the case of the expelled Ministers. To my plain common sense, these stipulations cut the ground from beneath their feet, and throw them back upon the dilemma of now resisting a law to which they were always subject as Wesleyan Ministers, and which has stood before them, with this full and explicit explanation, for the last fourteen years.

To escape this difficulty, it is endeavoured to show that the

mode of examination adopted at the last Conference was not a usual disciplinary investigation. And, in one sense, this is true; for, to the honour of Methodism, it may be said, its history affords few such precedents for the application of law as that of 1849. But, in the strict and proper sense, it can be shown that the course adopted by the late Conference was in accordance with the genius of Methodism, and with acknowledged precedent.

It has been already shown, that the genius of the system, in all its diversified economy, favours and requires a frank and full communication of religious sentiment and feeling: it might therefore be safely presumed, that, in the examination of ministerial character, a corresponding course would be adopted. If Ministers appointed to meet Wesleyan classes, to direct Leaders' and Local Preachers' Meetings, and to hold love-feasts, were to retain their own office by technical equivocation and legal subtilty, it would be the greatest anomaly ever witnessed in civilized life. The open, honest, religious genius of Methodism requires that its Ministers should be ready to unbosom their hearts to their brethren in all Christian fidelity and godly simplicity.

But the practice, as well as the spirit, of Methodism supports the course adopted by the Conference in this case. I will here only refer to the Minutes of 1777 in proof of this position. I do so the more readily, because the application to this case of the precedent to which I refer, has been so violently resisted. It has been contended that, because the evil dealt with in 1777 was a doubt respecting a call to preach, which was not the ground of accusation against Mr. Everett, therefore the precedent does not apply to his case. It might with equal reason be urged that it does not apply to him, because Mr. Everett is not named in the Minutes of 1777. What is the true state of the case? Mr. Wesley had gone on with his co-adjutors in their usual course of duty for several years; but at length it was objected to the Preachers, that "most of them were not called of God to preach." This allegation was regarded in a most serious light, especially as it was urged, "Supposing they were called once, have not many of them forfeited their calling?" To meet this objection, they were *examined one by one*. Let us mark the similarity of this proceeding to that under consideration. 1. Here was a case arising out of public rumour and general suspicion: so it was with Mr. Everett. 2. In this instance no individual was met by a substantive charge: such was the case with Mr. Everett. 3. Here the nature of the evil was such, that direct evidence to convict was scarcely possible, inasmuch as no witness could be expected to depose positively that a certain man was not called of God to preach: Mr. Everett stood in very similar circumstances; the crime of which he was suspected being of such a nature, when secretly perpetrated, as to present little hope of detection. How

was this case met by the Wesleyan Conference which had John Wesley at its head? By the righteous and common-sense decision, "Examine them one by one." It was a similar examination which Mr. Everett resisted, and for resisting which he was expelled. I defy honest ingenuity to avert the appropriateness and force of this precedent. *In John Wesley's Conference Mr. Everett must have had the doom he received in 1849.*

But this act of discipline is not only pronounced un-Wesleyan, but unscriptural and un-Christian. This objection is founded upon Matthew xviii. 15—17. But it is abundantly clear, from the scope of this text, that it applies to a personal injury, and not to a public crime. The case to which these directions apply is explicitly described by the Saviour: "If *THY brother shall trespass against THEE.*" But the case of Mr. Everett was altogether different: whatever private and personal injury was involved in the crime, it was not taken up, nor brought under the notice of the Conference, as a private and personal matter, but as a great and public offence against Methodism and against God. The distinction between this, and the case referred to in Matthew, is also obvious from the results which are supposed: "If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Surely this cannot apply to great public crimes. The case recorded by the Evangelist is clearly such as, if the accused party confessed his fault, the matter might there terminate: "*Thou hast gained thy brother;*"—brought him to a sense of his sin; he is penitent, and the evil is at an end. But does this apply to the general criminal jurisdiction of the church?

There was another Minister expelled by the late Conference on a direct charge of immorality: to his case frequent and unseemly allusion has been made during this controversy. Was it the duty of the Conference, in that instance, to have gone or sent their chief officer to that person to tell him his fault alone? And if he admitted it and expressed contrition, was he to be regarded as *gained*, or saved from expulsion or punishment? Is this meant? I cannot believe that any man will defend this application of the text. It is, in fact, evident, that the text quoted refers to private wrongs and personal injury, which, when arranged between the parties, may drop into oblivion; while it is equally certain, that there are great public scandalous crimes, which if a Christian Minister commit, he must of necessity, whatever penitence he may feel, be removed from his office; and whether Mr. Everett was innocent or guilty, the crime of which he was suspected is of this class. Nothing in the whole controversy has given me more surprise, than that experienced and learned men should, on such flimsy grounds, dare to call this act of discipline unscriptural and un-Christian, and say it is "flying in the face of the word and authority of the Son of God!!"

But, in considering this case in special reference to the Wesleyan ministry, if it be necessary to investigate the Wesleyan consistency of the Conference, and the scriptural and religious propriety of these acts of discipline, it is also important to notice the effect of this decision upon the ministerial character of the body. Those who are suffering under this decision, may be expected to confine their view to its effect upon themselves; but it might have been thought that others who have been, by a professed examination of the subject, induced to pronounce unmitigated condemnation upon the Conference, would have given themselves time to ask how the judgment adopted, or an opposite one, would have affected ministerial character in the Wesleyan body in time to come. I will endeavour to do this.

When the case of Mr. Everett was under consideration, the Conference had to decide whether the utmost facility should be given in order to test the moral and religious character of the ministry; or whether any suspected party was in future to be protected by conventional and technical regulations. As so much has been said of late years, by the small friends of Methodism, respecting the probability of a decay of vital piety amongst the Preachers, their laxity, and ambition; it may be asked, Could not the dullest of them see that here was an opportunity for protecting and ministering to their frailties? If the refusal to answer had been admitted as a sufficient plea, would they not have laid themselves open to the objection, that they had extended their opportunities of escape from punishment? Would not the men who have been libelled in the "Fly-Sheets" have been at once accused of adopting a precedent which would shield them from future inquiry? Would not the young men in the ministry have been exposed to the temptation of indulging in irregularities, provided they could do so with perfect secrecy? To my mind it appears extremely probable, that the admission of Mr. Everett's refusal to answer as a sufficient excuse, would have been fatal to the straightforward, honest, religious character, which the Wesleyan Ministers have hitherto sustained, and which I trust they will ever bear.

I therefore regard the Conference, by their decision in this instance, as adopting an old law-maxim, and inscribing upon the foundation of their jurisprudence, "*Truth is afraid of nothing but concealment.*"* They have plainly declared that they will not allow any subterfuge to avail, and place themselves individually before the church and the world, open to every inquiry which a majority of their brethren may think proper to put to them. Does this conduct deserve severe censure? Is it an indication of impurity or corruption? I freely avow my own sentiments: I never so heartily honoured, never so fully admired, never felt so proud

* *Veritas nihil veretur nisi abscondi.*

of, the Wesleyan Conference, as when, on that memorable day, they declared, in the face of all opposition, that the reputation of Wesleyan Ministers was in future, as in past times, to be fairly thrown upon the open-hearted genius of Methodism, and the religious brotherhood of Wesleyan Preachers.

But the person expelled, and the Ministers in the Wesleyan Connexion, are not the only parties concerned in this question: the people are connected with it, by the deep and vital interest which they have in the purity and fidelity of the ministry, as well as by all those Christian sympathies which unite them to their Pastors. The members of the Wesleyan societies must therefore feel interested in the discipline exercised by the Conference toward individual Ministers, and especially when this issues in expulsion.

The people would feel just cause for concern, if this case showed the power exercised by a mere majority toward those who differed from them in *judgment*, or *opinion*; or if it exhibited the *legal Hundred*, as claiming any authority over an individual, in opposition to the judgment of the great body of their brethren. This was what the venerable Founder of Methodism feared, when he left his dying charge to those who were from time to time to be vested with the legal power of the Conference, that they should not manifest prejudice or partiality toward their brethren. But the case before us shows nothing of this kind. Here was no faction, no distinction between the legal Hundred and other Ministers, no tyranny of a bare majority; on the contrary, the whole Conference rose *en masse*, and decided that the man who refused, under these peculiar circumstances, to answer the question put to him from the Chair, must cease to be a Wesleyan Minister.

But the sympathy of the people is demanded on the special ground that the course of proceeding in this case was intolerant, unrighteous, and unjust, inasmuch as it expelled a Minister without any proof of his guilt.

As a Wesleyan Methodist and a professing Christian, I feel deep interest in this charge. No part of the present controversy has given me more pain, than the unmeasured terms in which the alleged *wickedness* of this act has been denounced. I have no wish to claim for the Wesleyan Ministers, either individually or in their collective capacity as the Conference, any exemption from the infirmities of humanity. They are neither impeccable nor infallible; and yet, when five or six hundred of these men, each of whom in his own Circuit is known to be a man of prayer, and esteemed as a Minister of Christ, are met together, with fervent supplication to God for the aid of his grace, and with the purpose of transacting the affairs of the church, and promoting the interests of a great Christian denomination,—when all these men are brought to the same mind and judgment upon one question of special interest, I must confess that the decision of this assembly

comes to my mind invested with a weight of authority, as great as can attach to any human judgment whatever. And therefore I cannot help regarding him as a very bold, if not a bad, man, who will speak of such an act as consummate wickedness.

I am the more concerned to state my views fully on this point, because a most irreligious perversion of it has been industriously circulated. That five hundred religious men, met together for a great religious purpose, should, old and young, have their judgment blinded, their minds perverted, so that not a man among them retains "the spirit of love and a sound mind," but all believe and work out a lie, and perpetrate a great injustice, is a supposition which makes a startling demand upon our faith. But it is replied, "Corporations have no conscience." Am I to understand this to mean, that when Ministers assemble to transact the momentous business of the church of Christ, they lose their individual conscientiousness, and their personal interest in the guidance of the Holy Spirit? I know how this will be received by furious partizans, and politico-religious agitators; but it is necessary to expose the irreligious sentiments which have been put forth on this subject.

One thing was proved to the satisfaction of the Conference, namely, that Mr. Everett ought no longer to be allowed to remain a Wesleyan Minister. Whether this judgment was formed under the influence of a universal conviction that he was the author of the slanderous publication already mentioned; or whether it arose from a strong opinion that, in a case so deeply affecting the honour and purity of the Wesleyan Ministers and the Wesleyan people, his refusal to answer the question of the President was a capital offence; it is not for me to determine. Both these and other elements might, for aught I know, have contributed to this result. It is enough for me, as one of the Methodist people, to know, that it was virtually the unanimous decision of the Conference; and that, as they well knew this act would expose them to opprobrium and opposition, while an opposite course would have saved their feelings, and have preserved them individually in future from the same efficient scrutiny, no motive can with reason be assigned for this act, but a righteous concern for the purity of the church of Christ.

If the Wesleyan people have one concern respecting their Ministers, it is, that they be preserved throughout their public career in all that godly experience and religious purity which are guaranteed to the Connexion by the several examinations which take place when they enter the ministry. But how does this act of discipline affect these interests of the people? If the claim of Mr. Everett had been admitted, the Wesleyan Ministers would have been tacitly informed that, when once a man is received as a Minister, he may relapse into unrighteousness and indulge in sin; provided it be done with such secrecy and tact, that no direct proof can in a

formal way be brought against the offender. If this plea had been admitted, the principles of Lycurgus would have superseded those of John Wesley, and Methodist Preachers would henceforth not be punished for impurity of life, but for want of subtlety and shrewdness; not for sinning, but because they sinned so clumsily as to allow the production of proof. As one of the Wesleyan people, I fearlessly maintain, that the Conference were solemnly bound to avert an evil so pernicious at any hazard; and if past experience and previous records had afforded no precedent for the act, they were laid under solemn obligation to create one, by the excision of the man who dared to infringe the genius of the system, and adopt a course which, if allowed, must have been fatal to the purity of the body.

Having entered so fully into the case of Mr. Everett, a very brief notice of the expulsion of Messrs. Dunn and Griffith will be sufficient. These Ministers not only sympathized with and defended Mr. Everett, and placed themselves on the same footing with him; they were also, on several other grounds, subjected to discipline. My limits forbid an examination of all these points here; and it is unnecessary, because I shall have to notice them in another place, and also because I rest the Christian propriety of their expulsion upon their refusal to discontinue the "Wesley Banner," and "to pledge themselves to abstain from taking part, directly or indirectly, in any agitating or divisive proceedings." These Ministers have been lauded by many for resisting such terms of continued communion with the Wesleyan Conference. I am sincerely anxious to take a reasonable and Christian view of this subject; but, after long and careful consideration, I can come to no other conclusion than that such resistance rendered their expulsion necessary and inevitable. It is said, on their behalf, that "they are worthy of all honour," because they have maintained "the righteous privilege of every man to give publicity to what he conscientiously believes." Here we have again the fallacy which seems to pervade the case of these parties from first to last; namely, the confounding of the liberty which an individual is entitled to as a man and as a member of civil society, with that which he can reasonably claim as a member of any religious or select body. I have a right, as an Englishman, to write and print whatever I please, being amenable only to the law of the land for the abuse of this right. But as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, this right is limited by their statutes; so that it may be quite allowable for my neighbour to publish what I am under obligation to avoid. In like manner is my liberty limited by my connexion with the Wesleyan society: as a Local Preacher and Class-Leader, and even as a member of this communion, it is not right for me to write and circulate matter which another person might put forth without any breach of honour or consistency. Mr.

Dunn well understands this distinction, and well knew that, while his liberty as a citizen was undisputed, as a Wesleyan Minister his right to print and publish was limited by the judgment and decision of the Conference. And, certainly, nothing can be more reasonable than this. A man who professes to devote his life to the Methodist ministry ought, surely, to abstain from writing against its interests and cause; he who is supported to build up Wesleyanism, ought not to be allowed to pull it down. We are not now called to exhibit to the world a house divided against itself. Nor can it be reasonably denied, that the majority of the Conference is the legitimate authority to decide what is right and what is wrong in this case, and not an individual on his own behalf.

The Nottingham District-Meeting, with several numbers of the "Wesley Banner" before them, decided, "that the tendency of this publication is to promote strife and divisions, and that it consequently endangered the peace of the society." This judgment the Conference confirmed. Mr. Dunn and his coadjutor, therefore, as Wesleyan Ministers, were bound to discontinue the objectionable periodical. I am compelled to say, in all kindness to Mr. Dunn, that, from the first, I could only regard the "Banner" as calculated to organize a faction. Whatever might have been the intention of its projectors, every discerning mind could see that it was next to impossible to avoid this result. The District-Meetings and the Conference were the places where Mr. Dunn, and those who, in connexion with him, wished to alter the administration, or, to speak with strict accuracy, the executive authority, of Methodism, were called to exercise their abilities: their project of a publication to effect this object was vicious in principle.

But it was not only wrong, in my opinion, for Wesleyan Ministers to obtrude the questions at issue between the small minority and the great majority of the Conference upon the attention of the people in any form: in my judgment, the "Wesley Banner" did this in the worst possible manner. This small periodical was professedly intended to communicate information, not only respecting the general economy of Methodism, but also on revivals of religion, catechumen classes, and Sabbath-schools, &c., &c. The readers of the "Wesley Banner" would, therefore, be principally composed of our Sunday-school Teachers and Prayer-Leaders: for such the work appears to be studiously adapted and designed. Then let me ask any man of reason and religion, whether these persons, although occupying a most useful and interesting position, ought to be called upon to determine the relative merits of Ministers for eminent positions in the Connexion; or to decide upon grave questions of Methodist economy, upon which Thomas Jackson, Dr. Bunting, John Scott, and others, on the one hand, and Messrs. Everett, Dunn, and Griffith, on the other, are not agreed? Could any useful result be expected from this course?

But Mr. Dunn asserts that the "Banner" has not led any member to leave the society; and therefore argues that its tendency is not divisive. If a person were charged with vending deleterious articles of food, he would make but a lame defence, if he had simply to allege that no case of actual death could be clearly proved to have been already occasioned by their use. And so the "Banner" may have caused much discord and strife, may have scattered far and wide the elements of alienation and division, although it may not be possible to point to any single individual, and prove that he, through the influence of that publication, and through that alone, has left the Wesleyan society. That the "Wesley Banner" has exercised a most mischievous influence upon our pious poor, I know. Men of good sense and sterling piety, having been induced to read the periodical on account of Mr. Dunn's name being associated with it, have had their peace disturbed, their minds harassed and grieved, and, after passing sleepless nights, have come to me to seek counsel and instruction. Is the dissemination of these seeds of suspicion and discontent the vocation of the Wesleyan ministry? I think not. And therefore I judge that the Conference acted with wisdom and righteousness when they insisted that this publication should cease, and that those who had projected it should in future abstain from all divisive and agitating proceedings. And as this reasonable demand was refused, I regard the expulsion of these parties as inevitable, being, in fact, their own act and deed.

And thus, after a full and careful examination of these acts of discipline, I am brought to the conclusion, that, whether we specially regard the rights and duties of the expelled Ministers, the maintenance of religious honour and spiritual purity in the Wesleyan ministry, or the religious interests of the Wesleyan people, on each and every ground, these expulsions were righteous and necessary, and could not have been avoided without a dereliction of duty on the part of the Conference.

I now proceed to review the circumstances which led to and followed these expulsions, for the purpose of forming *a religious estimate of the public conduct of the expelled Ministers.*

On entering upon this important, but delicate, task, it may be necessary to observe, that I cannot possibly have any motive to form a harsh judgment in this matter. Of Mr. Everett's talents and literary acquirements I have formed a high estimate, both from public report, and from a personal knowledge of his works. With Mr. Dunn, for the last eleven years, I have been in friendly intimacy, have felt for him sincere esteem and respect, and a lively interest in his welfare. Of Mr. Griffith I have had no knowledge since the early part of his ministerial career. While, therefore, especially in reference to Mr. Dunn, I have strong motives to a

kind and lenient view of the case, I have no inducement whatever to a contrary course. I may, indeed, truly say, that, on this account especially, no public duty upon which I ever entered has been more painful to my own mind than this ; but I owe more to truth and Methodism, than I do to friendship and Mr. Dunn, and feel that I am labouring in the cause of righteousness in the prosecution of this investigation.

As these three Ministers stand before us, complaining that they have been expelled from a respectable and enlightened Christian communion, and claiming sympathy from the British public as victims of tyranny and oppression, suffering for the sake of truth and liberty ; let me ask, What religious truth, purpose, or object they advocated, prior to their expulsion, the advocacy of which had any influence upon their excision from the body ? These persons have been compared to Luther, when at the Diet of Worms ; they have been paraded before the world as reformers. Now, in such circumstances, it is surely fair to ask, What are the elements of this reform ? When were they propounded ? When Ministers of acknowledged talent are driven from a church to which they had been attached from their youth, and, in consequence, claim and receive a large amount of public sympathy, it may be expected that they have committed themselves to some great religious object. Is it so ? Had any of the great verities of the Gospel become perverted in Wesleyan theology ? and did these men stand forth the bold assertors of scriptural purity ? Had any of the Preachers become corrupt in morals ; and did the "expelled," in the manly attitude of truth, impeach the criminal, and perish in the effort ? Were any of our Methodistic usages become shorn of their pristine purity, and adaptation to promote the welfare of the work of God ; and did these Ministers exert themselves to remedy the evil ? Did these men labour under such an intense anxiety for the conversion of souls, that they overstepped the line of conventional propriety ; and were they severely visited for their involuntary error ? Was their quarrel with the Conference occasioned by their efforts to render the character of the ministry more effective, or to devise some means of kind and godly oversight, in respect of the men who, while in apparent good health, remain for a series of years as Supernumeraries ? Did any of these, or other evangelical objects, bring these men into collision with their brethren ? The common answer to all these queries is, No ; nothing of the kind ! No really religious object or purpose stands connected with the expulsion of these Ministers. Hear their own account : "We have been expelled," said Mr. Dunn, at the "great" Birmingham Meeting, "for maintaining civil and religious liberty ; refusing to be a party to putting down the freedom of the press, and turning a Wesleyan Conference into a Protestant Inquisition." "I have been expelled from the Conference," cried Mr. Griffith,

“for taking notes and claiming a right to publish them.” Mr. Everett says that he “was expelled on suspicion.” What does all this prove? I have no wish to rest unduly on these expressions. It is sufficient for my purpose that these Ministers severally disavow having been expelled on account of any *evangelical* effort, *spiritual* purpose, or attempt at *religious* reform. Painful as the duty is, I must look into the meaning of these declarations. Mr. Dunn’s words sound well to carnal ears. They were, a while ago, a kind of staple for after-dinner speeches; but having become quite hackneyed, have been lately laid aside; so that they come now with something like freshness to the mind. But what does the reverend gentleman mean? Was his civil and religious liberty so invaded, that he could not go on with his work as a Methodist Minister? Nay, he might have continued “in labours more abundant,” have preached as purely and as often as he pleased, and have won souls to Christ as he had formerly done: he had ample civil and religious liberty for all this. What liberty, then, was denied him? Simply the liberty of endeavouring to write down the great majority of the Wesleyan Conference. And as this effort by a Wesleyan Minister was neither *civil* nor *religious*, the liberty was very properly denied him, and the terms of his declaration are in this respect incorrect. Mr. Dunn’s reference to the liberty of the press is equally inapplicable. Might he not have condensed other folios of divinity, harmonized other portions of Scripture, and have scattered the seed of the kingdom as far and wide as he pleased? My heart in deepest feeling exclaims, “Would to God he had done so!” No; the liberty of the press which he struggled to uphold was,—I grieve to write it,—the liberty to sow discord, and to disseminate alienation and strife. Who turned the Methodist Conference into an Inquisition? The Ministers, whoever they were, who prostituted their sacred office to publish falsehood and slander; and the Inquisition which Mr. Dunn resisted was not the Popish monster raving against evangelical godliness, but a Christian effort to put away sin from the Ministers of the Gospel. Here are three men, who solemnly devoted their talents and energies to the work of the Gospel and saving souls. From this glorious vocation they have each submitted to be expelled. Why? There was a suspicion resting on Mr. Everett’s character: was it worth the sacrifice of his ministerial *status* to perpetuate this suspicion? If he had any claim to be called a Methodist Minister, a word would have destroyed this suspicion. Why was it not spoken? Was the religious importance of Mr. Griffith’s taking notes and publishing them sufficient to justify him in placing his judgment in opposition to five hundred of his brethren, and renouncing his means of usefulness rather than yield the point? And, although Mr. Dunn might have believed that the restrictions laid upon him were more than the case absolutely required, was it of more

consequence that he should have every modicum of licence to write and print his views of Wesleyan administration and polity, than that he should remain in his work, calling sinners to repentance, and training souls for heaven? If the Gospel of Christ be a great verity, such reasons for renouncing the work of the ministry will not abide the test of the judgment-day. No truth is more clear than that the expelled Ministers had no sufficient religious reason for placing themselves in their present position. Their doing so argues their having greatly over-estimated their own judgment and will, or greatly under-rated the weighty responsibility of the Christian ministry.

Further: It appears to me, that not only was there no adequate religious cause for which these Ministers subjected themselves to expulsion; there was no general or public one; their object was *private* and *personal*. If the Wesleyan Conference had waved any inquiry into the authorship of the "Fly-Sheets," the Rev. James Everett would still have received his allowance as a Supernumerary Preacher, and have enjoyed his *status* as a Wesleyan Minister. Bad as the administration of Methodism is; fearfully as Preachers and people are, according to his views, oppressed; awfully as Jabez Bunting and his associates have, according to his account, departed, not only from Methodism, but also from justice and righteousness; James Everett was not the man to stem the torrent of this oppression. No; he who is now exhibited as a martyr, prior to his expulsion, only said, (that is, publicly said; for I cannot take account of secret words or works,) "Let me alone, and I will let you alone." If Messrs. Dunn and Griffith had been allowed to lucubrate in the columns of the "Wesleyan Times," and in the pages of the "Wesley Banner," they would still have lived on in professed allegiance to Methodism, although some of its laws were, according to their opinion, "steeped in apostasy and unbelief." There would have been dignity and principle in their conduct, if any of them had staked his continued union with Methodism upon the repeal of some enactment which he regarded as unrighteous, or any usage which he believed to be unjust; but as it is, they can only be regarded as having fallen in a struggle to obtain more personal licence than could be accorded to them as Wesleyan Ministers.

I now extend my investigation to the public conduct of the expelled Preachers subsequently to the Conference. For, although the propriety or impropriety which they may have evinced, cannot apply to the justice of the act of discipline which is complained of, it affords, nevertheless, important evidence as to their character and judgment, and the extent to which they appear to be interested in the cause of Methodism, and in the kingdom of Christ.

Here I enter my solemn protest against agitation, as it is significantly termed, as being utterly indefensible, unscriptural, and

criminal. I do not now discuss the state of a church whose ecclesiastical economy is *supported by secular power*; nor that of one become *corrupt in doctrine or licentious in practice*. It is professedly admitted, as freely by the expelled Ministers as by the Conference, that Methodism still retains and ministers the pure Gospel of Christ; and that, whatever defects may have crept into its administration, its Ministers and people generally are converted to God, and show forth the validity of their conversion by a godly life. These things admitted, I dare maintain that no act of discipline exercised towards a Minister or member can in such circumstances justify either in appealing from an established tribunal to the members generally, much less to the world at large, however the suffering party may feel aggrieved, or judge his case harshly treated. I think this proposition perfectly sound in its application to an Independent church, but so clear, as to appear self-evident, when applied to a Connexion of societies spread over an empire like those of Methodism.

That my views on this important point may be fully seen, I lay it down as a maxim, that as Christians we are laid under religious obligation, in matters of discipline more particularly, to defer to the judgment of, and subject our will to, our brethren in Christ; and especially to those who, according to the constitution of the church, are invested with authority for this purpose. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves," said an inspired Apostle: "for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." (Heb. xiii. 17.) Again: "If he neglect to hear the church," said the Saviour, "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matt. xviii. 17.) These and other portions of Scripture place this duty plainly before the mind. And surely it will not be contended that those who have to administer this law to others, are themselves exempt from obligation to obey it. If, therefore, a Minister or member is subjected to rebuke or censure, by those who are duly charged with the government of the religious community to which he belongs, he should meditate long and prayerfully on the case before he presume to set the decision of his judgment above the discipline of the church. But it is objected, "As no human tribunal is infallible, a person may be censured or condemned unjustly." I freely admit this; but maintain, that if his best efforts to make his innocence appear to his judges do not succeed, he is then providentially called to suffer wrongfully. Hence it is said, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (1 Peter ii. 21.) "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." (Verse 20.) Again: "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." (James v. 10.) If, therefore, through human infirmity, or the

defective administration of the church, a person should be improperly censured or condemned, it does not follow that he is on that account to rise up into rebellious resistance. "The man," said John Wesley, "who affirms, 'I will do no ill, and suffer none,' may be a decent Heathen, but is no Christian." The views which I urge on this subject are supported and enforced by the great fact, that Christ reigns supreme in his church, and reveals in the Holy Spirit a Divine agency for the accomplishment of all his purposes of grace to mankind. Men ignorant of spiritual religion may regard the church of Christ merely as a corporation, united together and governed by conventional laws, and maintained by the principles of worldly policy. But the teaching of Christ, the practice of the Apostles, and the experience of spiritual religion, combine to prove that the great Head of the church not only maintains a constant spiritual union with his members, but, in proportion to their faith and devotedness, undertakes for them, controls the powers of Satan and of sinners, and thus upholds, guides, and ultimately saves them. To his guardian care the believer is invited to commit his body and soul, his danger and trial, his reputation and condition, in the church and the world. To those who do so, the Saviour says, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." (Isai. xliii. 2.) "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day." (Psalm xxxvii. 6.) Trusting in such direct assurances of Divine protection, the man of God, whose motives are mistaken, whose character is unjustly aspersed, and whose position in the church or the world is affected by the wickedness or infirmity of his fellow-men, may confidently say, "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up." (Psalm lvii. 3.) In a case of undeserved reproach, censure, or punishment, here is the way which the word of God marks out,—submission, patient suffering, faith in Christ. This may appear foolish to the wisdom of this world; but it nevertheless offers to the man of prayer a means of deliverance from unmerited reproach and pain, while it benefits the church, and gives glory to God. Agitation is thus shown to be unscriptural: it is also unwise.

By this agitation is to be understood an appeal made by the party who supposes himself aggrieved to the members of the church. In this appeal he, of course, makes an *ex parte* statement, exhibits his real or imaginary injuries, coloured according to his own sense of wrong. The object of this is to excite the hearers, that they may be induced to make such a demonstration of their sympathy, as shall, either by intimidating the authorities, or other means, repair the supposed injury. This course may be

suitable as the *dernier resort* of a political adventurer; but in respect of the church generally, as in the case now specially under consideration, it is decidedly unwise, because, while resisting legitimate authority, it aims to secure its object by means which are utterly insufficient for the purpose. Inflammatory statements in newspapers, and exciting, one-sided speeches, are not the best means of placing an important matter before the mind for adjudication. Nor are the members of a public meeting the best judges of such a case of discipline. A crowd may be coaxed and flattered by being called "a discerning public," and "the Christian public;" but does any man in his sober senses believe that any assembly called together in the course of this career of agitation, has contained five hundred men as well adapted by knowledge, judgment, and uprightness, to decide a question respecting ministerial character and conduct, as the five hundred men who sat in the last Conference? And even if this could be supposed, it would not meet the case, as in such an assembly the judgment of the wise would be confounded and paralysed by the interference of the foolish and the vain. Agitation in such circumstances is therefore unwise, inasmuch as it cannot place the subject fairly before the mind, and because it appeals from an authorized and sufficient tribunal, to one that is wholly incompetent and without authority.

But folly is not the worst characteristic of this course: it is wicked. I know the Wesleyan societies intimately; and I have no hesitation in affirming my deliberate judgment, that no Wesleyan society in England can be successfully agitated, in the manner now adopted, so as to be induced to take a prominent and influential part on behalf of any party, without sustaining serious spiritual loss. Let the whole process be religiously considered. The public mind is first reached, as far as possible, by newspaper arguments and addresses; then the complaining parties appear, and, asserting their innocence and oppression, revile their judges, and denounce the laws under which they suffer; and thus the people are excited to sympathy and interference. This, to be effectual, must not only be sufficient to elicit a good collection, but to lead the people to clamour against their Ministers, and to coerce them in every practicable manner, until they shall be compelled to rescind and abrogate that which, in their conscientious judgment, they believe to be right and just. Let me ask any man acquainted with the character of the human mind, the constitution of society, and the operations of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, whether this agitation can possibly be carried out to such an issue under the influence of a "spirit of love and of a sound mind." Is not this whole course an aggression upon personal piety generally, and especially upon that of the young, the unstable, and the uninformed? It is so in the present instance: the personal religion of the people is the *fulcrum* which must be *crushed* under the action of

the lever employed to raise these three men to the position which they formerly occupied. It has been well observed, that, in the science of government, a province may be alienated to save an empire; that physic allows the sacrifice of a limb to save a life; but that *religion will tolerate no reason for sin*. It is evident, then, whatever inconvenience, or even injury, an individual may experience from defects in the economy of a church, or human frailty in its administration, he is not at liberty to peril the piety of others with a view to his relief; and therefore agitation must be avoided, because, for this reason especially, it becomes sinful. I have good grounds to believe that formerly these opinions were held strongly by Mr. Dunn himself. The manner in which he would speak of the evil, and the pledges which he insisted on, when appointing Leaders or Local Preachers to office, are satisfactory proofs on this head.

But if it be unscriptural, unwise, and criminal to agitate religious society on account of the discipline exercised towards two or three of its members, under any circumstances, what shall be said of that carried on by Messrs. Everett, Dunn, and Griffith? Here the appeal is not limited to the Methodist people, who might be expected, to some extent at least, to understand the bearing of the questions at issue; nor even to the members of Christian churches generally, who would bring a serious temper of mind, and some religious discernment, to the investigation of the subject. In this instance, the public, without distinction, as indiscriminately as they are found in our streets, the wise and the unwise, the godly and the profane, are assembled together; and this body, dignified with the title of the *Christian* public, is charged with the duty of re-judging the decision of five hundred Ministers of Christ!

Let us take the "great" Birmingham Meeting as a type of the whole proceeding. On this occasion the gentleman who presided over a mixed multitude of five or six thousand persons, although no member of the Wesleyan society, thought it becoming in him to advise the Wesleyans "to thunder at the door of the Conference till it flies open to them; or else *stop the supplies*." Whether the violent energy of the Chairman gave a tone to the Meeting, or the strong feelings of the assembly acted upon the Chair, I know not; but it is certain that the proceedings throughout displayed the same spirit. Mr. Dunn, in a speech which my friendship for him prevents me from characterizing, ventured to say to this assembly, (of course, he meant his remark to apply to those among them who were Wesleyans, or members of Wesleyan congregations,) "The moneys which you gave to the Yearly Collection last March, when your Preacher gave you your tickets, and which you cast into the boxes at the July Collection,—*these have been taken*, to a very great extent, from the Contingent Fund formed by those two collections, *within the last few weeks*, for the purpose of circulating

throughout the land principles which, if I may judge from your countenances and expressions already, you decidedly condemn,—for the purpose of circulating pamphlets in defence of those recent acts of Conference.” Mr. Dunn, while uttering this language, well knew that every penny collected at the March visitation, and by the July Collection, for the Contingent Fund, had been disbursed at the last Conference. But it will perhaps be supposed by some persons, from the confident language of Mr. Dunn, that the Committee of this Fund may have made some advance for the purpose described. This, however, cannot have been done, for the Committee will not meet from the date of the last Conference until July 25th, 1850. And lest my non-Methodist readers may imagine that some private understanding has been come to by the members of the Committee, respecting the appropriation of money for the purpose stated by Mr. Dunn, I may inform them, that this, like every connexional fund deriving aid from the subscriptions of the people, is managed by a Committee composed of an equal number of Ministers and laymen. But the Contingent Fund Committee *does not yet exist*, as the lay members will not be elected until the next May District-Meeting. Nor is it the practice of this Committee to give a *pro formâ* assent to an application of this Fund previously made by the officers. I know, from personal experience, that no board in the empire can more carefully scrutinize every application which comes before it, and more warily dispose of the money intrusted to its care, than does the Contingent-Fund Committee. It is therefore utterly impossible that Mr. Dunn’s statement can be correct. Yet the words “mendacious” and “veracious” are upon his lips; and while using this unjustifiable and extravagant language, he asserts that he and his friends do not stand before the public “*as mere agitators, as religious incendiaries!*” Mr. Everett proceeded in a similar strain, and asserted that the Conference came before the public with “cooked accounts.” He then denounced “the rotten boroughs of Methodism,” and clamoured for “lay representation in the Conference,” and “vote by ballot;” while Mr. Griffith, as if determined to make a desperate effort to distance even his wild compeers, said, “He would sooner be a sugar-planting slave in the West-Indies, than in the Wesleyan pulpit, *where he was not allowed to preach the word of God.*” Yet these men ask for condolence, and seek for sympathy! If they believe their own assertions, they are fit subjects for congratulation. If they believe their own assertions, it is their deepest disgrace that they should complain of expulsion from a community of tyrants, hypocrites, swindlers, men *who will not allow them to preach the word of God!* And yet it is lamented that this connexion is dissolved!

But I put it to the serious reader, Can any religious reform be effected by such means as these? I have not attempted to de-

scribe "the indescribable confusion and uproar" which prevailed at this meeting, when a Minister who had been alluded to by name rose to defend himself, nor the brutal violence with which he was treated, nor the wild political character of the whole proceedings. Without going beyond the speeches of the expelled Ministers, I feel confident that a religious view of the whole proceedings must issue in the conviction, that these means can do nothing to correct existing evils, or in any other way to promote the spiritual interests of the kingdom of Christ.

Before passing from this topic, I must refer to the anomalous position of the Chairman. Was it proper, was it decent, for a man who is no Wesleyan to obtrude his views of church polity *ex cathedra* upon our people, and to urge them, in case the Conference would not make Methodism *to his liking*, to starve the Preachers into compliance? For Mr. Wright as a gentleman, and a man of business, I feel sincere respect; but he must allow me to tell him, that in using the language to which I have referred at the Birmingham meeting, he put himself into a false position, and adopted a course which neither reason nor religion can justify. So obvious is this impropriety, that the "Birmingham Mercury," while zealously defending the expelled Ministers and the meeting, could not believe that any but a Wesleyan would have used the language spoken by the Chairman, and consequently speculates with the most amusing *naïveté* upon the probability of the Conference *expelling Mr. Wright*.*

I close this inquiry into the public conduct of the expelled Ministers under a deep conviction that they are placed in their present position by a course of action utterly inconsistent with their duty as Wesleyan Ministers; and that their career of agitation, whatever else it may do, will mar the peace and diminish the piety of many estimable and excellent men. I know it is doing this. My heart sickens at the prospect. Yet God reigns; and the Head of the church can and will maintain his own glorious cause.

I now proceed to a brief review of the calumnies which have been poured upon Methodism and Methodist Ministers, ostensibly in consequence of these expulsions.

As this pamphlet may fall into the hands of some persons not intimately acquainted with the Wesleyan societies, it will be necessary here to make a preliminary observation. The aspersions, slanders, and calumnies, of which I am to speak, usually arise out of a professed sympathy for the expelled Ministers. Although a different opinion has been expressed, yet the fact of such strong and general sympathy as numerous public meetings, newspapers, and

* The Conference *expel a layman*! Yet such scribes would teach Wesleyans!

newspaper-correspondents seem to indicate, has, to some considerable extent, been regarded as a decisive proof that the *expelled* have been unjustly treated by the Conference. For the information of those who have adopted this opinion, I beg to submit, that but few of these sympathizers are Wesleyan Methodists. In exposure to aggression from persons not in actual communion with us, I think our societies hold a unique position in the history of Christianity. Offering ready admission to all who profess, and then practically manifest, a serious concern for salvation, Methodism annually admits great numbers into connexion with it; but as we maintain a godly discipline and enforce the experience of evangelical religion, and the manifestation of righteousness of life, many of these find the Methodistic way too strait, and either by acts of discipline, or under the influence of disappointment and chagrin, leave the society.

Further: Wesleyan Methodism, imbued with the firm but catholic spirit of Protestant Christianity, has kept equally aloof from high church externalism on the one hand, and from a crusading spirit against the Establishment on the other; while maintaining steadily its own scriptural position as a church of God, it has uniformly abstained from political agitation, and especially from the violence of political Dissent: these circumstances also have alienated very many from our communion who would otherwise have rejoiced in the privileges of Methodism, but who generally consider themselves kept from us by what they regard as defects in the ecclesiastical construction of our system. Again: there are, in almost every part of the country, many persons, who, during the several successive seasons of agitation with which the Wesleyan societies have been visited, have left the Connexion; for the terrible sirocco does not more certainly threaten destruction to animal life in Arabian deserts, than do these agitations minister to the loss of vital piety. Such persons, almost uniformly, regard themselves as victims to existing abuses in Methodism; and their feeling towards it corresponds to this opinion.

These different classes of seceders throughout the length and breadth of the land, with numbers of their sons, dependents, and friends, are, with very few exceptions, ready, upon any cry of "ministerial despotism," "Conference tyranny," or "Wesleyan reform," to rise, as by one common instinct, and to join in the clamour. They have been to Wesleyan Methodism what the Repeal faction in Ireland has been to British statesmen. And it is to these, aided by the most violent and least pious and discreet of other denominations, that the present agitators are mainly indebted for their crowded meetings, and the inflammatory press for its most voluble correspondents. This may, to some extent, serve to account for a large amount of the evanescent sympathy which the circumstances before us have elicited.

It must not, however, (as I have already intimated,) be regarded as an undisputed fact, when great apparent sympathy is excited for those who are wincing under an act of discipline, that the persons inflicting it are the guilty party. It has, on the contrary, been laid down as an axiom, by a person who will perhaps be regarded as an authority on this question, that, in such an instance, a large amount of sympathy proves the great guilt of the offender. As the calm and deliberate judgment of Mr. Everett on a case of this kind, in which he stands as a spectator, and a party to the administration of the law, and not a sufferer of its penalty, is interesting and important, I insert his own account of a conversation between himself and Mr. Dawson at length:—

“Mr. Dawson observed to the biographer, ‘You have been suspending Mr. —, I understand, for attending public meetings of a political character.’ ‘Such,’ it was replied, ‘has been the decision of the District Committee.’ Mr. Dawson returned, ‘There is great sympathy excited for him in the country.’ ‘That may be,’ it was answered; ‘in all cases of *suspension*, *the greater the offender the greater the sympathy*. Witness the still more serious *suspension* of Fauntleroy. Honest men,’ he subjoined, ‘are not treated in that way.’ Then, whirling round his finger, like a person suspended from the fatal tree, he said, ‘It is sure to affect the crowd. When we suspended Mr. — at Leeds, about seventy Local Preachers espoused his cause, and went off with him. A gentleman came to me, and asked, *What is the matter with you at Leeds?* I replied, We have had a riot, have laid hold of the ringleader, and *suspended* him; and, having exercised discipline upon him, there are about seventy others of the Local brethren who are determined to *hang*, or, if you please, *suspend* themselves in consequence of it.’” *

I do not copy this passage for the purpose of admiring the *taste* which Mr. Everett has displayed in his manner of alluding to the death of a fellow-creature, but to show his opinions on three important points. 1. He declares, that when Wesleyan discipline is exercised on a Minister, it may be taken as a rule, that *the greater the offender the greater the sympathy*. 2. That “honest men” have no chance of exciting such compassion. 3. That when this sympathy for a Minister subjected to discipline is so great as to induce seventy Local Preachers in one town to leave the society on his account, so far from its being a serious matter, he regards it as a fit subject for a *jest*.

But, leaving this question, I proceed to notice the slanders to which this misplaced sympathy has given currency. And, first, as it respects WESLEYAN MINISTERS.

I give precedence here to the assertion, that individual independence and honourable manly feeling cease to exist in the Wesleyan Conference: that while Dr. Bunting holds a paramount

* EVERETT’S “Life of William Dawson,” 5th ed. page 351.

position, he is surrounded by a body of favourites who, exalted to important offices in the Connexion, form a *clique*, invincible in power, before which every thing in Methodism must submit, and to which all the other Ministers are blindly and slavishly subservient. It is not necessary to quote the language in which each of the expelled Ministers in turn denounces this *ecclesiastical oligarchy*, as they are sometimes pleased to term what they on other occasions call the *platform*, or the manner in which the "Wesleyan Times" lays all the "guilt upon a few," and exonerates the other Preachers, because "*they remain in ignorance!*" It is sufficient to mention the fact, that this statement has been propagated with the utmost industry from one end of the land to the other. Is it necessary to say that this is a *vile slander*? One scarcely knows which to wonder at most, its wickedness, or its absurdity.

It is freely admitted, that, in the Wesleyan Conference, there are some Ministers who occupy a very prominent position, and whose judgment and intellectual power exercise a very important influence upon the decisions of that body. It may also be granted, that, for many years Dr. Bunting has, by common consent, been regarded as the greatest among his gifted brethren. But is this a state of things to be blamed or prevented? When was there ever an assembly of five or six hundred men convened for the transaction of important business, without a similar result? When persons unite for any great purpose, they almost instantly fall into several grades, according to their respective intellectual power and mental energy. It is very true that this universal fact, this law of nature, may sometimes produce disagreeable results. There were men, in by-gone days, who thought it very unjust that Chatham, and his gifted son, Fox, Burke, and Percival, should have exercised such a mighty influence upon the government of England, and its relations with the world, when they were only individual members of the British Parliament like a thousand others. There are men now who regard it as most preposterous, that, in all the political difficulties of recent years, none but Lord John Russell, or Sir Robert Peel, has been deemed fit to hold the helm of State, and to direct the destinies of the British nation. All this, to some minds, may appear as a very unreasonable preference of one man over his fellows; yet so it has been in the British Senate and in the Wesleyan Conference: and it is very unlikely that any explanation or defence of this state of things which I might offer, would produce a good effect in the minds of the persons that utter these complaints. It is, however, generally found, when these objections are fairly sifted, that they do not arise so much from the fact that some men are elevated to the possession of more power and distinction than others, but because of the mistake which is supposed to be made in not selecting the most deserving men for such prominent positions. It is very probable that arrangements might have been made in the Conference, some few years ago, which would have

rendered Mr. Everett as staunch a supporter of *brotherly examination* at the present time, as he was at the Newcastle District in 1837; * which would have led Mr. Dunn now to support our "blessed Methodism" in all its entirety, as vigorously as he did in 1839. This course, however, was not taken; and the man who is supposed to have had the power to direct a different course, is held accountable for the consequences. Hence arise the spiteful animosity against Dr. Bunting, the malignant and implacable persecution of an eminent Minister, who has numbered "threescore years and ten."

A gradation of influence in the Conference is freely admitted; but when it is said that there is one man who rules over and despotically dictates to the platform, and that the platform exercises a tyrant domination over the great body of the Preachers, the statement is not only slanderous, but absurd. If there had been but three grades of intellectual power in the Conference, and these separated from each other by broad lines of demarcation; or if a Minister raised to any important position was, either by prescriptive right, or through the operation of civil law, invested with permanent or long-continued possession of power, there might have been some reason for this allegation: but the contrary is the fact. The great body of Wesleyan Ministers are not ignorant of Methodism, as has been wickedly stated; leaving the few knowing ones on the platform alone guilty of the wickedness said to have been perpetrated at the last Conference. Ministers in great numbers are found in the Conference as well-informed, as independent, as able and as willing to claim and maintain their rights, as any men that can be found in Europe. This body contains many who, by their compass of information, and grasp of intellect, are destined to fill the highest offices in the Connexion: they occupy their present lower position only on account of their age and standing in the ministry. It is a foul libel, a scandalous falsehood, to say that these Ministers are blindly led and slavishly held in subjection by any man or body of men whatever. If it were necessary to adduce any evidence in proof of this, matter amply sufficient for the purpose would be found in a recital of the several elections to the highest Connexional honours which have taken place within the last few years. The fact is, the regular gradation of intellect and influence in the Wesleyan Conference, renders the tyrannical domination of a faction impossible. I will not insult the reader by defending my excellent friend the President, or Richard Reece, Dr. Newton, Samuel Jackson, John Scott, Dr. Dixon, or Dr. Hannah, and many others who might be named, from the imputation of acting under

* It will scarcely be credited, but it is an undoubted fact, that in 1837 Mr. Everett, in connexion with two other Preachers, acted upon the Resolutions of 1835, and demanded a brotherly examination of another Minister by the Newcastle District. The Minutes of this Meeting, dated July 5th, 1837, signed by James Everett, as Secretary, still exist in the Minute-Book of the Newcastle District.

the coercion of any directing mind. Their names and characters are an ample guarantee of their honourable independence.

But, further, this slander is refuted by the fact, that the position of every member of the Conference, being subject to fresh consideration year by year, is fixed, for the ensuing twelve months, by the votes of the majority. Now, if a community of slaves were intrusted with complete freedom of election, would they be so thoroughly demented as to choose by ballot their former tyrants, to rule over them a little longer with a rod of iron? The power of the most influential member of the Conference can only be exercised annually through the suffrages of his brethren. Can a man then be found infatuated enough to assert, that Methodist Preachers proclaim their own infamy, and rivet their own chains, by their voluntary votes? The slander is as absurd as it is malignant.

Again: the Wesleyan Ministers are charged with uniting their influence to destroy the liberty of the press. Respecting this, pages of virulent abuse have been written against the Conference; and, strange to say, the slander has been brought before the public so plausibly and pertinaciously, as to affect and influence many well-informed individuals. Much has been said respecting the number of newspapers which take an unfavourable view of the proceedings of the late Conference. The mistaken notions entertained on this point have, to some extent, contributed to this result. I have letters in my possession, which clearly prove that the conductors of more than one respectable provincial newspaper have been led to favour the cause of the expelled Ministers, and to oppugn the award of their judges, under the influence of this cry, that "the Conference has exerted its power against the liberty of the press." This slander is based upon the same sophistry and misrepresentation, which pervade the statements made by the agitators on this subject. I allude to the way in which they speak of the acts of Conference as if they were those of the government of a country, and of its enactments as if they had been national law; than which there cannot be a greater misconception and misrepresentation. In the present instance, what has the Conference done to restrict or injure the liberty of the press? Has any petition been framed for presentation to Parliament for the establishment of a censorship? I defy any man to point out a word or act of the Conference which indicates any wish for an alteration of the law on this subject. "O dear, no!" it is said; "but it has condemned the 'Wesleyan Times,' and laboured to put down the 'Wesley Banner!'" But what has this to do with the liberty of the press? By "the liberty of the press," I believe, is to be understood, the right which every Englishman has to write and print whatever he pleases; he being held responsible by the civil Magistrate, if he abuses this privilege to the damage of the state or of any of his fellow-citizens. I boldly assert, that in no place in England can five hundred men be found, who would more firmly

and zealously contend for this element of English liberty, than the men who sate in the last Conference. "What, then," is it asked, "is not the liberty of a Methodist and the liberty of an Englishman the same?" My opponents may chuckle, but I freely answer, No. An Englishman has liberty to dance, and sing foolish songs; a Methodist has not. An Englishman has liberty to profane the Sabbath; a Methodist has no such liberty. An Englishman has liberty to read all the foolish and wicked trash which issues from the press; a Methodist is, by the "Rules of Society," prohibited from "reading those books which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God." And, surely, if a man is not at liberty to contaminate his own mind, he is not at liberty to poison the minds of others. Accordingly, Mr. Wesley laid it down as a fixed rule, that no Preacher was to publish anything unless it had been previously submitted to his inspection. This rule he re-enacted in 1789, just before his death. Those, therefore, who are so devotedly attached to what they call "John-Wesley Methodism," will not complain of the Conference for exercising a wise and godly oversight in respect of the literary productions of their Preachers. And is there any thing unreasonable in this? Does any intelligent Christian man believe, that a wayward Preacher should have the liberty of connecting himself as a contributor to any of the numerous periodicals published in London? Would not the avowed connexion of a Minister of the Gospel with some of these be an everlasting scandal to the Christian ministry with which he might be united? If this is admitted,—as it must be,—then the only question touching the exercise of this oversight in the case before us, respects its application to the "Wesley Banner" and the "Wesleyan Times:" and that need not be mooted here; for, whether it respected these periodicals or the "Dispatch" and the "Man-in-the-Moon," the result would be the same as to the question of the liberty of the press. It is therefore evident, that the charge brought against the Conference for infringing this liberty, is false and slanderous. It was bound to take cognizance of the connexion of its Ministers with the public press; and, if it judged these periodicals dangerous to Christianity or to Methodism, to forbid the continuance of that connexion. But this, it will be seen, had nothing whatever to do with the liberty of the press.

I cannot dismiss this part of my task without briefly referring to the coarse epithets and violent language which have been recently applied to the Wesleyan Ministers by their adversaries. If different opinions had been formed respecting the discipline exercised by the late Conference, considering that this was done by five hundred Christian Ministers of acknowledged piety and irreproachable life, it might be expected that, even although the propriety of the act might be earnestly debated, the language employed would be courteous and respectful. The reverse is the

case, to an extent which has throughout this controversy filled me with surprise. We read, for instance :—"The *tyranny* and *injustice* practised toward the triumvirate." "The *arbitrary* proceedings of the Wesleyan *autocrats*." "They are expelled, most unceremoniously and most *tyrannically*." "The Conference has imitated the style, as well as the methods, of *autocratic* and priestly *despotism*." "Such inquisitorial authority." "A despotism, a tyranny, and Jesuitical influence, more complete, more grinding, and more debasing than was ever attempted by Romanism." "The tyranny and injustice now exhibited." "The monstrous and anti-English tyranny—rancour and revengefulness—inquisitorial despotism—this indecent oppressiveness." "The worst principles of the papal system as the main-spring of their ecclesiastical self-government." "The divan and the London Preachers." Is this language, when applied to Christian Ministers, to be justified? Aspersions of this character are not worthy to be made subjects of grave argument : they are sheer *slander*. Let it not be supposed that I have ranged over the whole controversy to select these expressions. No ; I found them all, with much more of a similarly offensive kind, on three pages of the October number of the "Wesley Banner." This aggravates the evil. Here is language, referring to Methodism and Methodist Preachers, rivalling the worst vituperation of Toplady, in a work bearing the honoured name of WESLEY, and specially addressed to the intelligent *youth* of Methodist families : and, more than all, this work professes to be "*a revival record* !" Has Christianity changed? Does "the wrath of man" now "work out the righteousness of God?" Of the "Wesleyan Times" it is scarcely necessary to speak. In this paper "the Conference clique" is a civil appellation for Wesleyan Ministers ; their religion is spoken of as "*volcanic piety* ;" and as to the character of the Conference, it is boldly affirmed that, by expelling Mr. Everett, "**VERILY THEY HAVE NOW CONSUMMATED THEIR WICKEDNESS.**" What more than this can be said? Nay, can any man be justified in using this language respecting the vilest sinner upon earth? The act which calls forth this denunciation is that of the Conference expulsions : consequently, it is affirmed, in the most solemn (if not profane) manner, in words as strong as the English language can furnish, that the five hundred and seventy Ministers who were parties to this act, have filled up and perfected the measure of their sins ; have reached the maximum of crime ! *

* While this terrible condemnation of Conference law, and assertion of the unmeasured wickedness of expelling a Minister, is fresh on the mind of the reader, let him turn to Mr. Everett's own opinion of this law, and of expulsion, as given in a book which is now being sold for his benefit. Referring to the case of Dr. Warren, Mr. Everett says,—"The decision of the Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst in this case, is the act of legalizing the discipline of the Wesleyan Conference in reference to the Preachers, during the intervals of its sittings, and,

These slanders, be it remembered, are not circulated by infidels and sceptics,—not by Papists and intolerant High Churchmen,—not by furious political Dissenters, or callous Antinomians. This is the language of those who claim to be Wesleyans *par excellence*, held toward the great body of Wesleyan Ministers gathered together from every part of the island, and fairly representing the ministry of the Connexion. These are the men : their productions are to be the means of restoring Methodism to its pristine purity of form and spirit. These publications it is deemed worse than heresy to denounce. Wesleyans must be at liberty to read, official men among them may advertise and sell, these slanderous periodicals, while they defame the Wesleyan Preachers, and place the great body of the ministry, with full-measured crime, on the very threshold of hell! “Tell it not in Gath!”

Can members of the Wesleyan society, and even office bearers in its ranks, regard such furious slander as the result of an allowable difference of opinion, and read and vend the publications which contain it? If so,—although disposed to bear with erring brethren to the utmost limit which Christian charity can demand, and which a reasonable regard for the welfare of the body will allow,—I am compelled to assert, that such men have no right to the privileges of Wesleyan communion. But what shall I say of members of other religious bodies,—men who appear to be reasonable and pious, and who, nevertheless, assist in the circulation of this slander, and place the vehicles of its communication before their children and dependents? I will not judge them—I will pray for them. But I warn them, in the fear of God, to mark the result. Can this course promote family religion? It cannot.

But this storm of fury is not professedly confined to the Wesleyan Preachers : the institutions of Methodism come in for an equal share of malediction. On this concluding part of the subject I may be very brief ; as, whatever explanations may be required respecting acts of discipline, or defence of ministerial character, Wesleyan institutions which have stood the test of a hundred years’ opposition, and have ministered to the salvation of millions in Great Britain and America, besides having been the means of proclaiming the Gospel in every quarter of the globe, may rest quiet in their strength. Yet, for the sake of those other denominations, who have been led to a consideration of this subject, as well as on account of the unstable and unwary of our own body, I will add a few remarks on the attacks which have been so fiercely made upon some of our most prominent institutions.

to a certain extent, *making the Wesleyan constitution a part and parcel of the law of the land.* THE REMOVAL OF A FEW FACTIOUS SPIRITS FROM THE BODY, WHO WERE DISSATISFIED WITH THE SYSTEM, WAS MERELY TEMPORARY ; but this boon will go down to the latest posterity with British law ; and in this invaluable boon Mr. Dawson *rejoiced*,—NOR LESS THE BIOGRAPHER !!” —Memoirs of William Dawson, by James Everett, p. 403. Fifth thousand, 1842.

Here I must first direct attention to the constitution of the Conference, and the attacks which have been made upon it. I have already shown how this body arose into existence by the appointment of John Wesley. And it may, I think, be fairly questioned, whether any association of men, since the days of the Apostles, have been more signally guided in their public course, or more blessed with substantial success, than has this united brotherhood of Wesleyan Ministers. In 1791, the year in which Mr. Wesley died, the number of members in the Wesleyan societies of Great Britain and Ireland, was 72,476. The number reported at the last Conference (1849) was 370,495, showing that throughout the fifty-eight intervening years there had been an average increase of above five thousand members *per annum*. Besides this, the machinery of the system has been enlarged and consolidated, while the wide range of its spiritual agency has been maintained in healthy and vigorous action. This appears to be admitted on all hands. And yet it is stated, that the Connexion is now placed in such circumstances, as to render "AN ENTIRE REVISION" of its polity absolutely essential. "This," says the "Wesleyan Times," "we must have." This revision "must," it is alleged, "begin with the Deed of Declaration," as "this instrument has always been pleaded in bar of any change in the composition of the Conference, and without *some such change* it were hopeless to expect any great improvement."

In opposition to this demand, I contend that the well-being and success of Methodism depend upon the spiritual co-operation of all the orders of agency in our societies, in working out the principles and design of our revered Founder, and not in any alteration of the constitution of the Conference. The great design of God in raising up Wesleyan Methodism was to save souls, and to spread pure evangelical godliness throughout the British dominions and the world. Whether it presents to our view a finely-balanced and delicately-adjusted system of church polity or not, very conflicting opinions may obtain. But one thing appears to my mind sufficiently evident,—no revision of the Conference can necessarily impart to Ministers a more self-denying, devoted zeal in the ministration of the Gospel; or a more spiritual and persevering diligence in the pastorate among the people. Neither can this proposed revision give to Local Preachers, Leaders, Sabbath-school Teachers, or Prayer-Leaders, more of the mind of their Divine Master in their several labours of love; nor can it impart to members of society a more perfect devotedness of body and soul to the service of God. And, whatever noisy agitators may say, these are the elements of our strength. Our vocation is not the preparation of a perfect *ideal* of church polity, but the salvation of souls. Our great business is not the introduction of our own peculiar views into the constitution of the body, but the subjugation of our own souls, and those of our friends, neighbours, and fellow-men, to the

Divine sway of our Lord Jesus. It is, moreover, my firm conviction, that any alteration in the constitution of the Conference, instead of promoting this great object, would only retard it, by diverting the public mind of our people from the great spiritual design of our union. One change effected, busy bustling people would soon find another want, and then another; and thus we should sink from a great and efficient evangelical denomination, into a society of visionary speculators. I do not hesitate, therefore, to express my solemn conviction, that all this clamour arises out of a stratagem of Satan, to divert us from doing God's work, and saving souls from death.

But if a revision of the Conference be called for, in what is it to consist? Here one fact is particularly observable: all the parties to this demand profess the most sincere, the most devoted, attachment to Wesleyan Methodism as modelled by our Founder. The expelled Ministers incessantly iterate their devotedness to "John-Wesley Methodism." "We," say the "Wesleyan Times," "desire John Wesley's Methodism restored entire."* The declarations which have been published, expressing sympathy with the expelled Ministers, breathe the same spirit. "We," say my friends at Falmouth, "hereby record our firm and unabated attachment to Wesleyan Methodism, as committed to our fathers by its venerable Founder, the Rev. John Wesley." Are these hollow and hypocritical professions put forth to deceive the unwary? Or do they express the sober and deliberate judgment and opinion of these parties? I am bound to believe the latter: but, then, what revision of the Conference is necessary to restore the Methodism of John Wesley? "We regard," say the Falmouth sympathizers, "the admission of laymen to all the District and Conference Meetings as essential to the conservation of the purity and prosperity of the system." So, then, the Methodist system retains its *purity* and *prosperity*, or these cannot be conserved; and if so, does it not strike the most superficial thinker as a very extraordinary circumstance that the constitution of Conference,—which fostered the rise, development, and progress of our religious body, and under whose ruling influence it has become the minister of salvation to millions,—which has enabled the Connexion to fight its way through every variety of opposition, and take its stand among the great and influential religious denominations of the kingdom, and which has through a whole century confessedly maintained its *purity* and *prosperity*,—does it not seem to be most extraordinary that it should be deemed "*essential*" to revolutionize this constitution in order to conserve the triumphs which have been won under its influence! Others may see no difficulty here; but to my plain common sense it would seem, that the admitted success which has followed the system through an hundred years might be fairly taken as the best guarantee that its

* October 15th, p. 701.

principles and polity are essentially sound. But, passing over this point, I meet these demands for a revision by asking, What were the composition and powers of the John-Wesley Conference? Did laymen sit there? It is well known to every intelligent Methodist, that the Conference, at the death of our Founder, possessed more extensive powers than the Conference does now; large and extensive concessions having been made to the people by the "Plan of Pacification" in 1795. And hence, in the "Wesley Banner" for October, the Conference is accused of having laboured for some years "to obtain that power which they possessed previously to 1795." Such is "the harmony" which exists among those who are labouring to obtain the direction of the Wesleyan mind! Whatever views may be entertained respecting the constitution of the Conference, or the wishes felt for its revision, Wesleyans have a right to demand that those who preach reform may evince honesty and consistency. Let us hear no more of "John-Wesley Methodism," or let no mention be made of the introduction of laymen into the Conference: the two things are so diametrically opposed to each other, as to expose to certain ridicule and contempt the efforts of those who profess to harmonize them.

It is, however, earnestly contended that the admission of laymen into the Conference is absolutely necessary to the well-being of the Methodist societies, and to the adaptation of the system to the spirit of the times. I do not think it unkind or unreasonable to reply to those who thus speak, that as this change would make a vital alteration in the supreme authority of the body, against the wishes of the great mass of the people,—and especially as those who think such a form of government essential, may see it already in operation in connexion with the same doctrine as is preached in Wesleyan pulpits,—the simple way of meeting the difficulty is, for them to join the New Connexion, instituted on these new principles in 1797, and leave us to enjoy ours.

I say, this change ought not to be pressed against the wishes of the Wesleyan people, even admitting that no insuperable legal difficulties stand in the way; and I am fully satisfied that the mass of the people would greatly regret such an alteration, were it ever effected. I freely confess, that in every aspect I regard the plan as open to very serious objection. The number of persons attending Conference can scarcely be increased; and I should greatly regret displacing any of the Ministers that laymen might supply their places. The election of lay delegates would, I think, produce considerable and damaging excitement. Yet, even if these objections, with many others that might be urged, were all removed, I should still be prepared to contend that the proposed alteration would be pregnant with the greatest danger to that blessed cause with which the providence of God has so graciously united us.

But it is asked, "Shall the Preachers, then, possess unlimited power, unchecked by any control from the people? Is not this

certain to lead them into great danger, and to place the laity in a state of unreasonable subserviency?" In answer to these questions, I may freely admit, that when Mr. Wesley died, the Conference, succeeding to his authority, stood invested with powers which, if not absolutely dangerous to the just liberties of the people, were calculated to prevent the expansion of Methodism, and its successful progress in the world. This difficulty was deeply felt; and the means of meeting it were earnestly debated in the Conferences which followed the death of Mr. Wesley. Two modes were suggested: the first proposed to give to the people, through the Trustees, Leaders, and Stewards of the societies, enlarged powers in their several localities, by which they might be protected in the enjoyment of every reasonable liberty, and have the means of bringing to trial any Preacher believed to be immoral in life, unsound in doctrine, or deficient in ability. The other mode was, to admit the people to co-operation with the Ministers in all their assemblies, not excepting the Conference. After long and deep consideration, the first of these plans was adopted, and the Plan of Pacification of 1795 carried it into effect. But as this was a great disappointment to those who advocated an opposite course, two years afterward (1797) Mr. Kilham and other Ministers, with the reforming portion of the people, separated themselves from the body, and formed a different constitution, upon the broad principle, that the people were to be associated with the Preachers in all their meetings for business, and were, in fact, to be recognised as the source of all power. This was the origin of the Methodist New Connexion. The case now mooted has, therefore, been long ago fully deliberated and settled. Wesleyan Methodism, although it leaves the Preachers in possession of the Conference, secures to every member, whatever may be his position in society, ample liberty for every reasonable and godly purpose. And, although I deprecate making any remark offensive to my brethren of the New Connexion, it may be allowable to state, that the success of their society has failed to prove that their scheme of polity is essential to the rapid growth or to the great prosperity of a religious community. It is but just to add, that the expelled Ministers did not at first recommend the admission of laymen into Conference; they knew the case too well to adventure such a recommendation. They limited their demand to the conducting of its business with open doors; referring principally, I presume, to the admission of reporters for the press. This concession would be followed by the publication in the newspapers of all the Conference debates and decisions. The subject is an important one. How far it is possible or proper to allow every thing that transpires in a religious body like the Conference to appear in public prints, is matter of serious doubt; and yet, to be candid, some better mode of communicating the proceedings of that body to the public, appears to be desirable. I am, however, content to leave that question with the Conference,

assured that, as the necessity of the case becomes apparent, it will be provided for, under such wise restrictions as will prevent it from being injurious.

If, in such a time of agitation and controversy as the present, a reasonable hope might be entertained that any Wesleyan institution would escape the storm, and be regarded as neutral ground, where all might meet in harmony and peace, that institution would be the MISSIONARY SOCIETY, that glory of Methodism! Far removed from all questions of church polity, and disseminating, through one common instrumentality, the waters of life to the uttermost parts of the earth, no reason appears why any hand should be raised, any tongue moved, against its stability and efficiency. But, alas! this institution is made a principal object of attack. The Secretaries are assailed, their motives maligned, their conduct condemned, even their afflictions ridiculed, and they pursued with coarse and vulgar abuse; while it is alleged that the funds are squandered in a wanton and extravagant manner. Strange as this conduct may appear, this attack upon the Missions is not unprecedented. On the contrary, it may be taken as a distinguishing element of those wicked agitations to which the Wesleyan body has been from time to time subjected. When, in 1834, the Rev. J. R. Stephens was suspended from the Methodist ministry for attending violent political meetings, and the "Christian Advocate" of that day raised a great clamour respecting it, a fierce attack was in consequence made upon the Mission-House. Subscribers were counselled to "stop the supplies," and great efforts were made to induce them to adopt that advice. Again, in the following year, when Dr. Warren was expelled, a similar course was pursued: the Missions were a main point of attack. And now, after a lapse of fourteen years, because Messrs. Everett, Dunn, and Griffith have been expelled, every thing is said to be wrong at the Mission-House. How is this? Does extravagance at that establishment occur simultaneously with these acts of discipline? Or does Argus sleep, except during the clamour of popular agitation? Although this circumstance is in itself sufficient to indicate the origin of these attacks, yet, as this glorious cause is identified with the great interests of our Redeemer's kingdom and the salvation of the world, as well as with the honour and religion of our people, it becomes a serious question, How or by what means our members and subscribers can be furnished with a solid confidence that their subscriptions are judiciously and faithfully applied to the important object for which they are given.

I unhesitatingly affirm my decided conviction, that this cannot be done by any more detailed publication of the Mission accounts. The multifarious business of that establishment,—the expenditure of £100,000 *per annum*,—the constant intercourse which is maintained with almost every part of the civilized and uncivilized world, —together with the proper requisites for the maintenance of an

adequate station and staff, for the transaction of all these laborious and costly operations,—must necessarily involve numerous items of expense, respecting which no person ignorant of the general working of the Society is adequate to form an opinion. I therefore put altogether out of account the charges of extravagance paraded in the “Fly-Sheets,” in the “Fly-Sheets Vindicated,” and in other equally veracious publications; simply observing, that every one of those charges which I have had an opportunity of scrutinizing has been found to be utterly false, or grossly exaggerated. I will, therefore, specify only two cases, in which the most shameful efforts have been made to mislead our people.

The first respects the extravagant and untrue assertions which have been made respecting the salaries of the Secretaries. It has been asserted in the “Fly-Sheets,” and is many times over re-asserted in the “Fly-Sheets vindicated,” that each of the Secretaries costs the society £500 or above, *per annum*. Now, the truth is, that the salary of each Secretary is £150 per annum; if they have children, they receive the usual allowance for them in addition, and, as is the case with every Wesleyan Minister, the use of a furnished house, with coals and candles. Their salaries are, in fact, adjusted on the allowance granted by the London Circuits to their Ministers. In meeting anonymous slander, I deem this explanation amply sufficient. But if it is asked, “Under what pretext could such a statement be made?” I reply, By the aggregation of charges which had really no more to do with provision for the Missionary Secretaries, than for that of the reader, except the sum paid for the purchase of a house, which is duly divided among the Secretaries as a part of their salary:* the extra amount is principally made up by the cost of accommodation which is provided in connexion with the residence of the Secretaries for Missionaries and their wives, either outward bound or returning to England: a most wise, provident, and kind arrangement. I have sat down at Dr. Beecham’s table, with several young Missionaries and their wives, who were staying in London previous to their sailing for foreign stations; and have thought how much better it was for these young people to be in a place where they could obtain useful information and advice respecting their future perilous work, and strengthen each other’s hands in God, than if they were scattered abroad in London lodging-houses, exposed to all the excitement and dissipation of mind which a first sight of the great metropolis is so calculated to induce. Yet the expense of this arrangement is unjustly set down as if it were complete emolument passing into the pockets of the Secretaries!

The other slander to which I allude is given in the “Fly-Sheets Vindicated,” (page 39,) where the writer refers to “the annual

* I here gladly avail myself of a communication from a valued friend and talented Minister, to be found page 50, to which I beg to call the particular attention of the reader.

soirée at the Mission-House, at which only the elect are admitted ; cards of invitation being issued to the gentlemen and ladies who promenade at them." To this passage is appended the following note : "Plain members of society will hardly understand this foreign and fashionable term. Once a year the Missionary Secretaries issue cards of invitation to their favourites, who come with white kid gloves,—think of Wesleyan Ministers showing off in white kid gloves!—and the gentlemen and ladies, after walking about arm in arm through the suite of apartments, refreshing themselves with wines and other drinks, cakes, &c., and indulging for some hours in this fashionable lounging, retire, without singing, without prayer, without devotion of any kind ! and these men are to be lauded to the skies !" Having attended several of these meetings, (in fact, I have been absent but from one or two,) I can speak to this slander from intimate personal knowledge. It contains nearly as many direct falsehoods as clauses.

1. *It is not true*, that this company is "elect," in the invidious sense insinuated, as the friends of our Missions both from town and country are invited, as numerous as the size of the rooms will allow. At the last meeting they were inconveniently crowded.

2. *It is not true*, that this is a fashionable meeting in the sense described. I never wore a white kid glove there. I never saw a Methodist Preacher in white kid gloves there. Nay, I do not recollect that I ever saw any gentleman in white gloves at any of these meetings.

3. *It is not true*, that wines are drunk there. Tea, coffee, and biscuits are provided, and no other drinks.

4. *It is not true*, that there is no singing, prayer, or devotion of any kind at these meetings. At every one which I have attended, a hymn has been sung, a portion of holy Scripture read, a brief religious address delivered, a few friends from the country have spoken, and solemn prayer has been offered to God. Nor are these exercises unblest. I know not when I have felt a deeper and more hallowing influence than when engaged in these devotions. The negative merit of being unobjectionable, is not all that can be claimed for these meetings : they are of important service. Persons from every part of the country who have come up to the Missionary Anniversary, who may have long known each other by name, and who probably would never otherwise have had an opportunity of social intercourse, are here introduced to each other. It is, in fact, the family circle of the friends of our Missions. I thank the Secretaries for this wise and kind arrangement. But what shall be said of those who so mischievously pervert plain facts ? Let me warn my Christian friends who have not the means of testing such reports *themselves*, not to rely upon any thing said by persons capable of making such unfounded statements.

But although it is impossible to present a balance-sheet of Missionary expenditure in such detail and minuteness, as shall be

intelligible and convincing to every subscriber, it is possible for every supporter of the Missions to obtain satisfactory evidence that the great object of his heart's desire—the conversion of the world—is promoted to a reasonable extent by means of this Society. This may be done by showing what has been effected by the Wesleyan Missions in comparison with similar institutions. In doing this, I have no wish to give pain to members of other denominations. The case is pressed upon us not only by those who formerly belonged to us, but also by some who are but too ready to manifest their malevolent feelings; and while I cite a perfectly independent authority, I avoid referring to any particular denomination. In the “Great Commission” of Dr. Harris, (page 184,) the learned author gives a tabular view of the circumstances and results of the great Protestant Missionary Institutions throughout the world. From this table I learn, that while the Church of England Missionary Society, the Baptist Missionary Society, and the London Missionary Society, in the year 1841, received among them an aggregate sum of £208,333, they employed altogether 338 ordained Missionaries, that the members or communicants of these three religious bodies, added together, amounted to 46,088, and their scholars to 57,618:—while the Wesleyan Missionary Society, which received that year only £90,182, employed 367 ordained Missionaries, had 84,234 members on the several stations, and 56,849 scholars. So that, with less than half the funds, our Society maintains more Missionaries, has nearly as many scholars, and nearly twice as many members, as these three great Societies all put together. Or, to show their relative results more clearly, while these Societies, taken together, require £613 *per annum* to sustain a Missionary, the Wesleyan Society does it for £229; and while it costs these aggregated Societies £4. 11s. 8d. annually to bring over each member from Heathenism to Christianity, this is done by our Society for £1. 1s. 4d. *per annum*. At the same time the Wesleyan Missions instruct about the same number of scholars as are taught by these three Societies that have more than twice the amount of annual income. I do not insinuate—because I do not believe—that there is any waste of means, or extravagant expenditure, in any of the Societies here specified. But, surely, Wesleyans have reason to be satisfied with the administration of their Mission affairs, when one pound of their subscriptions does as much for the conversion of the world, as four times the amount applied through other channels of communication with the Heathen.

I close my remarks on this subject in the language of the Rev. William Atherton: “When I speak on this subject, I do not talk about what I have heard: I do not talk about what I have read: I talk about what I know; and I know that all is right and straightforward.” And I venture to assert, It is only by relying on such testimony that the great body of Missionary subscribers can be satisfied as to the proper application of the funds of the Society. They must

confide in their Committee. If the present one be not composed of honest, honourable, godly men, men who are of good report where they are best known, and who give manifest proof of their love for the cause, let other men who possess these qualifications be sought out and invested with the weighty trust. But whoever may be charged with this duty, they must have the confidence of the great body of the people. And I believe the present Committee still retains their unabated confidence.

I now come to my last topic ; namely, the slanders which have been vented against the *Connexional Committees*. This is an important subject, and I feel a strong disposition to discuss it fully ; but my limits will only allow of a few very brief observations. Much spiteful declamation has been put forth respecting the composition of these Committees. It is not my purpose to attempt a proof that the selection of the men takes place in the best possible manner, or that there are no other Ministers or laymen in the Connexion eligible to be raised to this position. I presume, however, that in the selection of persons for these Committees, other and more weighty considerations have to be regarded than simply the awarding of an honourable distinction. The slanderous remarks to which I have referred, are not only rendered utterly useless to any good purpose by the personal malignity with which they are imbued, but likewise evince a disposition to make individual ambition the main-spring of Wesleyan public life. This is apparent throughout. I decline to meddle with this aspect of the case. If the Conference in this or in any other way is supposed to confer honorary degrees, I must leave the claimants and the donors to settle their own account. My view of the case is that of a practical man of business. I regard these Committees as appointed for working out our great connexional purposes ; and I maintain that they are efficient for these purposes. This brings me again into collision with my friend Mr. Dunn and his associates. Two out of the five objects, which they propose to themselves in their career of agitation, relate to the Committees. To say nothing of the incoherency between these propositions and the causes which led to the expulsion of these parties, I will briefly notice the nature of the proposed alterations. It is first suggested, "to discontinue at the ensuing Conference the Nomination Committee, and henceforth to choose the Connexional Committees by ballot." I presume this is intended to apply both to Preachers and to laymen. I have no wish to speak positively with respect to the former ; yet it appears to me, that a select number of senior Ministers—knowing the business of each Committee, the habits and character requisite for the transaction of its affairs, and the peculiar qualifications of the several Ministers—will be more likely to select suitable men for each branch of duty, than the whole Conference would be without such preliminary aid. I confess I should have more confidence in a

Committee thus selected, and afterwards submitted to the approbation of the Conference, than I should have in one emanating from a random ballot, without any such previous inquiry. The result of the ballot might be to place, occasionally, a few men who may happen to be popular with their brethren in a prominent situation. But whether the practical working of these Committees would be improved by this mode, even in the case of the ministerial members, is, I think, open to very serious question. But, however that may be, I am sure the project is perfectly Utopian as respects the appointment of lay-members. Passing over other important considerations, it should be taken into account that persons serving on these Committees have not only to attend the Conference frequently, but also have occasionally to travel to London to attend special meetings, and to remain in town three or four days at a time; and be it observed, they have not only to submit to this inconvenience, and appropriation of time, but to bear the whole of the expense incurred. Slender as my own services have been in this duty, I have travelled thousands of miles and spent some scores of pounds in rendering them. And will men who are expected to act thus, be balloted for?—why, then, ballot for the annual subscribers to the Connexional Funds! which would be a project equally sane with the former.*

But, in respect of the other proposition of the expelled trio,—namely, “that a large independent Committee be chosen for the purpose of investigating the state of the Connexional Funds, as far back as that Committee may deem necessary,”—I can express no vague opinion. It is open to the greatest objection, and merits unequivocal condemnation. The men who recommend the people to require this measure, have been recently expelled from the Wesleyan Conference, as they say, illegally and unrighteously. On this account they denounce the wickedness of the act, and are journeying through the kingdom to rouse the people to demand a repeal of the regulation which they name as the instrument of their punishment. In those circumstances can it be believed that they are cognizant of peculation in respect of the funds, or extravagance in their appropriation, and now hesitate to declare it? That they are withheld by any lingering sentiments of delicacy or respect, is impossible; for they incessantly assail the Conference, and especially the leading men, with bitterness, and charge them with crimes which they are utterly unable to prove. Yet their

* It is always wise to test the theories of violent reformers with practical results, if possible. The expelled Ministers demand that all Connexional Committees shall be elected by ballot. Now it happens that one of our most important ones, the Stationing Committee, is so appointed. Has this Committee given them satisfaction? So far from it, that it is called “the slaughter-house of ministerial reputation.” What hope is there, then, of a different result, if the plan of balloting were made universal?

long-continued connexion with the body, and intimate intercourse with members of every Committee, must have informed them of any abuse, or delinquency, if such had existed. In this position do these men boldly allege extravagance or misappropriation of money against any official man, or body of men? No! They dare not. They have been challenged again and again to do so, but are silent. But what do they? Why, slanderously insinuate that the members of the present Committees are neither independent nor honest men. The Methodism of the empire is moved to demand a large and *independent Committee* to investigate *the state of the Connexional Funds!* Was ever such a motion made before, in the absence even of the allegation of wrong,—not to say, proof? On whom are the members of the present Committees dependent? Until *cause is shown*, I, as one of these maligned members, fling back the foul aspersion, and call upon the people to reject the slanderous proposal.

I gladly close this painful investigation. Whatever effect it may have upon the reader, I am convinced that, if the three Ministers so frequently referred to, had themselves lived near to God, and yielded that affectionate and reasonable deference to their brethren, which their sacred calling required, all of them would now be happy and useful members of the Wesleyan ministry. I am satisfied that the Conference, whatever frailty individual members may possibly have evinced, was in this affair guided by the Spirit of God to a wise and righteous decision. I have not the shadow of a doubt that all our Connexional Funds are managed with prudence and frugality, by wise and good men. And I exhort Wesleyans every where to mark them who cause divisions and offences, *and avoid them*. Cleave, my brethren, to John-Wesley Methodism in its only true sense,—the science and practice of saving souls. Let us live for this, labour for this, give for this. Let us trample under foot the fearful but prevalent delusion, that the church is to be perfected by political reforms, or a captious scrutiny of public affairs; but, each keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, let us grow up into our living Head, even Christ.

NOTE.—Page 45.

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR,

THIS charge of Mission-House extravagance provokes a remark or two upon the fraudulent and malicious statements of the "Fly-Sheets." It will be remembered that this notorious publication is an avowed attack on the character and person of Dr. Bunting and his "favourites." In the "table of Mission-House Expenditure," I find the following are the first three entries:—

MISSIONARY SECRETARIES	YEAR.	ITEMS.	SALARIES.	COALS, &c.	REPAIRS.	TOTAL OF THE THREE ITEMS.	COST OF EACH MAN.
			£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Bunting, Beecham, and Alder.	1833*	Salaries, including clerks, £964. 18s. 7d. stated as the year following ..	364 18 7				
		Repairs, furniture, and purchase of a house in Hatton-Garden.....			1367 3 2	1732 1 9	577 7 3
Ditto	1834	Salaries of three Secretaries	369 9 0				
		Ditto, arrears of deceased Secretaries ...	197 17 0				
		Medical expenses, and Mr. James's funeral.....	208 4 9				
		Repairs and Furniture for the Mission-House and three Secretaries' houses ..			362 16 9		
		Coals, Candles, Taxes, Rates, Insurance, &c., for the Mission-House and Secretaries' houses		495 11 5		1633 18 11	544 6 3½
Ditto	1835	Salaries of three Secretaries	489 9 9				
		Repairs of Mission-House and Secretaries' houses, and additional Furniture.			382 5 11		
		Coals, Candles, Taxes, Rates, &c., for Ditto.....		430 16 5			
		Medical Expenses for Secretaries, and Mr. Watson's Death, &c.	69 4 9			1371 16 10	457 5 7

* The dates are according to the title-page of each "Report," as "ending the year, April, 1833," &c. £600 will be found deducted for "Clerks and other Assistants," mixed up with the "Salaries" of the Secretaries.

Let the avowed object of the "Fly-Sheets" be borne in mind, in connexion with the above table and note. Living eminence is unsparingly attacked; but the anonymous assassins have not dared to assail *departed* worth. I observe, then, guided by the statement in the note,

1. That Drs. Bunting and Alder were not at the Mission-House when the "Report" for 1833 was published. That "Report" was issued in April; these gentlemen were not appointed till August.

2. The "Report" for April, 1833, everybody knows, contained the Financial Statement for 1832, closing with December 31st of the latter year. Mr. Watson and my honoured father were appointed at the Conference of 1832; and not one penny of the items charged in the table could possibly have reached Drs. Bunting and Alder.

3. The injustice of dividing the cost of the purchase of the house among the three Secretaries, is too obvious to require comment. But, right or wrong, the purchase was effected before my father's death, while we were living in Hatton-Garden.

4. As to 1834, I remind you that the "Report," dated in that year, is really for 1833, and that Drs. Bunting and Alder were not appointed till the Conference of 1833; so that they could not receive more than one-third of the items of salary for that year.

5. That the indignation of every honest man ought to be roused, on finding the "arrears of deceased Secretaries," and the "Medical Expenses and Mr. James's Funeral," placed to the account of Drs. Bunting, Beecham, and Alder, and duly divided under the head of "Cost per Man." The same sin against all equity and truth, is perpetrated in regard to Mr. Watson's death the next year. The item of "Medical Expenses, &c.," in 1834, is easily explained. During the six years in which my father held the office, I find no entry under this head, as applicable to the Secretaries' families; the only medical expenses charged being those of returned Missionaries. This at once explains how the item in 1834 was so large.

I should not have thought it worth my while to forward this, but for the fact that all the alleged "extravagance" at the Mission-House is laid, by these mendacious scribes, at Dr. Bunting's door; whereas, for the two most expensive years in the "Table," Dr. Bunting had little or nothing to do with it. And, secondly, because the allegation that the Secretaries cost £500 per man, is not borne out, even by their own fraudulent statistics; the only years in which that figure is reached, being the two on which I have commented above. Dr. Bunting and his excellent colleagues require no defence from me; but I cannot stand tamely by, when God's great cause is placed in peril by these false and malicious accusations against them. Let others read the "Fly-Sheets," as I have done. Let them take something which they understand and know, and bring their knowledge to test the veracity of these "naughty publications;" and they will find abundant justification for this epithet of our friend, Mr. Dunn.

Yours, most truly,

JOHN H. JAMES.

Penzance, November 14th, 1849.

THE END.

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